Lucky
Numbers
Montague Glass

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LUCKY NUMBERS

BY

MONTAGUE GLASS

AUTHOR OF
Y'UNDERSTAND

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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LUCKY NUMBERS

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NOBODY'S got to go nowheres, Mawruss, if he don't want to go," Abe Potash declared one morning in July.

"D'you think it's a pleasure for me to go to a place like Short Beach and watch every evening a lot of lunatics dancing?" Morris demanded. "Might you would like such things, Abe, but me I am built differencely."

"Then what do you go for?" Abe asked.

"I tell you," Morris replied angrily, "if me and Minnie wouldn't go down there her Uncle Max would never forgive me."

"The worst that happens me should be that my wife's relations would never forgive me!" Abe ejaculated.

"If I would have your wife's relations, Abe, then I'll give you right," Morris retorted; "but if your Rosie would got a childless uncle, which only last year his wife dies on him, y'understand, so rich like Max Margonin, y'understand, I bet you would go and spend the winter with him in Souther California. rather as make him *brogus*

at you. D'you think I want that sucker he should go to work and leave his money to charity?"

"*Gott soll hüten!*" Abe said.

"Then what are you talking nonsense?" Morris continued. "So me and Minnie would go down and join Uncle Max at Short Beach tomorrow, and you could depend on it I would leave there every morning on the first train after breakfast and go home on the first train before dinner. Believe me, Abe, the less I see of that *medeena* the better it suits me."

Abe grew somewhat mollified toward his partner.

"You should anyhow quit here early enough to get a sea bath, Mawruss," he urged.

"Sea baths don't agree with me, Abe," Morris said. "I'd sooner that Max Margonin takes 'em, Abe. The undertow is something terrible at Short Beach, and besides, Abe, the five-fifty-eight train is early enough. Last night when I went down there to see about a room I counted on that five-fifty-eight three resident buyers and Henry Lesengeld of the Lesengeld & Kammer Dry Goods Company of Cincinnati. He's also staying at the Victoria—him and his wife, his wife's sister and three children. I bet you it costs him fifty dollars a day there at the very least."

Abe shrugged.

"I guess he could stand it, Mawruss," Abe commented. "Them Lesengeld-Kammer people is an A-number-one concern. They're rated from two hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand, credit fair. I looked 'em up only yesterday."

"You looked 'em up, Abe!" Morris exclaimed. "What good does that do? Looking up concerns you don't sell merchandise to is like smelling the cooking which other people is going to eat. All the good it does is to make you hungrier."

"Well, if you would only get hungry enough for Lesengeld's account, Mawruss, might you would be able to cop it out maybe."

"Don't worry about that part," Morris declared. "If you ain't satisfied with what I'm going to do to them Short Beach bluffers this summer, Abe, I hope Max Margonin should live to be a hundred yet."

"He'll either do that or get married again, Mawruss," Abe said encouragingly. "Especially now, Mawruss, you want to look after him pretty careful, because widowers is like babies, Mawruss, the most dangerous time is the second summer."

"That's the least of my troubles," Morris declared. "A quiet old fellow like Max Margonin

ain't lookin' to get married again. You should see the mourning he's in. Actually he's wearing a black silk shirt, Abe."

"Laundry ain't so cheap at Short Beach neither; but anyhow, Mawruss, I hope you'll enjoy it down there."

"I told you before, Abe, I don't go to enjoy," Morris replied. "I'll be perfectly satisfied if I only get decent sleeping and eating at the Victoria Hotel."

Even these modest expectations were not realized, however, and two days after the conversation recorded Morris entered his place of business at eleven o'clock in the morning, bearing every appearance of annoyance and disgust.

"Nu, Mawruss," Abe cried, "I thought you would get the first train out of Short Beach after breakfast. Seemingly they serve a combination breakfast and lunch at Short Beach."

"A man must got to get a little sleep sometime, Abe," Morris retorted, "and if he couldn't get it in the night he's got to take it in the morning. I give you my word we didn't go to bed till half-past three."

"That shows what a fool you are," Abe commented. "Who the devil sits up till three o'clock in the morning, I'd like to know!"

Morris glowered at his partner.

"Leon Sammet for one," he replied after a pause. "Sol Klinger for another, Mozart Rabiner also. Even B. Gans wouldn't go to bed so long as Lesengeld sticks it out, and what for a fool do you think I am that I should go to bed and leave a prospective account like Lesengeld & Kammer in the hands of them sharks, Abe?"

"Still that makes six of you," Abe said. "How could you play pinochle six handed, which is not including your wife's Uncle Max Margonin?"

Morris snapped his fingers.

"I forgot all about that old snoozer," he exclaimed. "Minnie told me to see him the first thing this morning, and apologize for leaving him alone all evening."

"Was Minnie in the game, too?" Abe asked.

"What do you mean—game?" Morris cried impatiently. "There wasn't no game. They danced there till half-past three, and I'll bet yer the old gentleman didn't get a wink of sleep all that time."

Abe's head became palsied with amazement and disgust.

"So!" he said. "You danced till half-past three! And then you come down here and expect to do business, hey?"

"I expect to do business just so much as Leon

Sammet and all them other *roshoyim*, Abe, because all I did was to sit round while Leon Sammet danced with Mrs. Lesengeld till he looked like he'd been in bathing with his Tuxedo on. No, Abe, I didn't dance last night because I don't know how to, but you can bet your sweet life I will be dancing next week."

"You will be dancing next week!" Abe said.

"Sure I will," Morris replied. "I've got an appointment with the professional to take a lesson this afternoon at five o'clock."

Abe sat down and glared indignantly at his partner.

"You ain't going to do no such thing," he said. "You got an appointment right here in the store every day from eight until half-past five. Either you would do business or you would do pleasure, but you can't do both."

"Do you think it's a pleasure that I am getting some one to learn me dancing?" Morris expostulated. "Ten dollars an hour that professional charges us. I tell you, Abe, nowadays, when you figure cost prices, labour and material is nix. It's the overhead which makes prices high."

"Overhead!" Abe exclaimed. "Do you mean you are going to charge up these here dancing lessons to the expense account?"

"Why not?" Morris asked.

"Why not!" Abe said. "What do you think —I am going to pay half your dancing lessons for you?"

"All right," Morris said, "then you take dancing lessons, too."

A satirical smile spread itself over Abe's face and it was apparent that he was about to launch a particularly telling rejoinder.

"No, Mawruss," he said, "you could go in for dancing if you want to, but me, I am going up to the art needlework department at Appenweier & Murray's and take a few lessons in embroidery. H'afterward we would let Minnie and Rosie come down here and attend to business, y'understand, while you and me would stay uptown and do the cooking and housekeeping.

"Let us act like men, Mawruss, not ladies. If we got to dance to sell goods, Mawruss," he declared, "we might just so well run a cabaretel show to entertain our customers with and be done with it. We are going to do business in a business way, Mawruss, or otherwise not at all. So I don't want to hear no more about this dancing business and that's all there is to it."

Nevertheless, when Abe and Rosie journeyed to Short Beach on the following Sunday and observed, during that afternoon and evening, the age and sound financial standing of the men who

circled the dancing floor in the grillroom at the Victoria Hotel, Abe began to think that his condemnation of dancing had been slightly ill-judged. To be sure, Max Margonin was more than outspoken in the expression of his disgust at the spectacle.

"Look at them cows," he said to his niece Minnie, who with Morris was entertaining Abe and Rosie at a table abutting on the dancing floor. "I bet you eighty per cent. of them is grandmothers and they dance yet."

He snorted contemptuously.

"And their partners call themselves business men," he added. "If I would be a credit man and I seen one of my concern's customers dancing in a public dance hall like this, I wouldn't sleep till I got him to assign enough accounts to me to cover his bill."

Abe nodded, but without enthusiasm, for among the throng of dancers he discerned B. Gans, Henry Lesengeld, and a dozen other manufacturers and retailers whose credit was unimpeachable by the most meticulous of credit men.

"Oh, I don't know, Uncle Max," Morris protested. "It stands in the *Haphtorah* already that there was dancing even in them old times yet."

"Not the one-step *oder* the hesitation," Max retorted. "Maybe the *Krakaviak oder* the *Gasotzki* they danced it, and then only by weddings or something special. But morning, noon, and night, to see them *meshugoyim* dancing like they would be wound up already, it is honestly sickening."

Abe was about to nod again, but his head remained stationary at the spectacle of Leon Sammet ducking and turning with Mrs. Lesengeld clasped in his arms.

"Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Margonin," he said huskily, "a business man has got to get a little exercise the same like anybody else."

"That ain't exercise, Potash, that's *meises*, which in former times people would get sent away to a sanitarium or a lunatic asylum for."

Here Abe saw B. Gans smiling into the upturned face of Mrs. Lesengeld's sister, Miss Pauline Kammer, as they trod the mazes—so to speak—of the fox trot, and he began to think that even if Max Margonin was the wealthy uncle of his partner's wife, he could not in all self-respect sit and listen to an old fogy dogmatize in such an out-of-date fashion.

"Them is back-number idees you got, Mr. Margonin," he said. "Dancing is not only good for the health, y'understand, but also it don't

cost nothing. Might you think that all them fellers would be better off supposing they was pickling themselves with smoke, y'understand, and going back on four hundred in spades, fifty cents a hundred, twice double double, while their wives is working their fingers to the bone trying to make a last season's cape effect look like a basque. Some folks has got funny idees, Mr. Margonin, I must say."

Abe punctuated his indignation with a righteous snort, while Morris grew pale with apprehension as he observed the effect upon his wife's uncle.

"Well," Margonin said, scraping back the chair, "if that's the case that I got funny idees, Potash, all I got to say is that I don't got to stay here and get insulted."

"What do you mean—insulted, Uncle Max?" Morris cried in anguished tones. He laid a restraining hand on Max's arm, but he was shaken off abruptly as the old man rose from his seat.

"He didn't mean anything by it," Mrs. Perlmutter said. "Did you, Abe?"

"I didn't mean to insult nobody," Abe corrected. "And if anyone gets insulted by such remarks, why, all that I can tell him is——"

"Well, now that he's apologized, Uncle Max,"

Morris interrupted with a venomous glance at Abe Potash, "sit down and drink a little glass of Schnaps with us."

"I never drink Schnaps at no time," said the puritanical Max Margonin; "and I guess I could go up to my room if I wanted to, couldn't I?"

"Sure, sure," Morris agreed, and he smiled with such forced amiability upon his uncle by marriage that no one—not even the recording angel—could have been deceived as to the underlying profanity.

They watched Margonin's progress to the hotel lobby and then Minnie Perlmutter heaved a long-restrained sigh.

"Come on, Mawruss," she said, "let's try this fox trot before it's over."

Morris blushed and looked guiltily toward his partner, but Abe only smiled his encouragement.

"Don't be ashamed, Mawruss, believe me, Rosie and me would do it, too, if we wasn't too old."

Mrs. Potash bridled and frowned.

"What do you mean—too old?" she said.

With Miss Pauline Kammer's family endeavour had survived hope in the matter of providing her with a husband, and while outwardly Mr. and Mrs. Lesengeld still put forth an occasional

effort, however, there was no note of despair, in either her wardrobe or deportment, for she dressed and danced as though, instead of forty-two, she were only twenty-two—or eighteen for that matter. Consequently she came in for Max Margonin's especial condemnation.

"Did you ever see anything to equal it?" he declared on Monday evening. "A woman her age dancing?"

He sat with Leon Sammet at a table in the grillroom not ten feet from where Mr. and Mrs. Lesengeld were taking their after-dinner coffee.

"Not so loud, Margonin, for heaven's sake!" Leon said.

"Am I saying anything out of the way?" Margonin demanded with undiminished forcefulness. "At her age, Sammet, a woman should be either a grandmother or a hopeless invalid. Because a lady who could still dance at fifty ain't got no excuse why she shouldn't have got married at twenty."

"*Geh weg!*" Leon whispered. "She's only forty-two."

"She's good preserved, I admit," Margonin said as he gazed with grudging admiration on the gyrating Miss Kammer. "She don't look over forty-two, but with widders and old maids, Sammet, you should always add ten years to

their looks and even then you're likely to underestimate."

"Maybe you would and maybe you wouldn't," Leon retorted; "but all the same, Margonin, you couldn't underestimate the capital she's got invested with the Lesengeld & Kammer Company. I bet you if she's got a cent invested in that business she's got fifty thousand dollars."

"Well," Margonin commented, "you're a single man, Sammet, ain't it?"

"That's my business," Sammet said with what —if he had been a nobleman in a novel instead of a garment manufacturer in a summer hotel— could with justice have been described as a touch of hauteur.

"Sure, it's your business," Max replied as Sammet started to leave. "It ain't my business, Sammet, because even when I was in business, Sammet, I was in the retail clothing business and not the garment business. *Aber*, if I would be in the garment business, y'understand, a hint is as good as a kick any time."

Sammet flipped the fingers of his right hand.

"*Schmooes*," he said, and moved on to the Lesengeld table.

Margonin smiled maliciously and glanced at his watch. He had postponed his coffee and liqueur until the arrival of Morris and Minnie,

so that when the time should come to settle the bill Morris might insist—against Margonin's protest, of course—that, having ordered the coffee and liqueurs, he, Morris, must pay for them. More than ten minutes elapsed, however, and just when Max had determined to risk drinking at his own expense Morris and Minnie appeared in the doorway of the grillroom followed by Abe and Rosie Potash.

"*Nu!*" Max exclaimed. "You must like it down here—coming two days in succession."

"We do," Abe replied, and Rosie beamed her assent.

"In fact, we come down here for the summer, Mr. Margonin," she said.

"Every day you and Morris are both coming down here?" Max asked.

"Sure; why not?" Abe said.

And in response Max Margonin sniffed, whereat it appeared to his auditors that Max had delivered himself of a long condemnatory speech, in which he had dealt severely with the folly and iniquity of two partners both leaving their business to run itself into the ground at half-past five every afternoon. Abe, therefore, glared angrily at Uncle Max, while Morris endeavoured to smooth things over, first by nudging Abe and

second by contorting his face into what he believed to be a conciliatory smile.

"We did consider one of us coming down only for week-ends, Uncle Max," he said, "but we couldn't decide which of us should ought to be the week-end feller."

"Now don't begin that again," Minnie pleaded with a despairing glance at Rosie. "We've had it all through dinner."

"Say," Abe said, "if Mawruss and me wants to come down here every day, Minnie, what is it skin off that old—off of anybody's nose?"

He was so determined at all hazards to be calm toward Uncle Max that the veins stood out on his forehead and his eyes grew bloodshot.

As for Uncle Max, he had determined to take offense at nothing Abe might say, and to create this amiable impression he smiled at Abe in a manner calculated to provoke a breach of the peace.

Therefore Morris hurriedly called a waiter, and in a few minutes Abe and Max Margonin temporarily forgot their differences in the noisy inhalation of black coffee. They were thus occupied when there appeared on the dancing floor a slender young man whose hair seemed to have been applied to his head in three coats by an

expert carriage painter, and whose dinner coat and trousers were constructed of white flannel. Immediately there fell upon the assemblage what might be termed a hush, save for Max Margonin's second cup of coffee, and when the slender young man said "Ladies and gentlemen," Abe raised his eyebrows inquiringly at Morris.

"That's the professional," Morris explained, and before Abe could ask any further questions the professional made an announcement which, to those guests who were familiar with his style of delivery, conveyed the news that there would be a one-step and a hesitation contest, to be followed by a lucky-number contest, and that all the guests of the hotel were eligible to compete for three handsome prizes. The remaining guests, to whom the professional's enunciation sounded as though he had got out beyond his depth and was coming up for the third time, immediately asked: "What did he say?" And in the uproar of explanation that followed Max Margonin rose.

"Where are you going, Uncle Max?" Minnie inquired.

"For a walk," Max replied. "Maybe some people enjoy seeing it a pack of *chamorim* dancing themselves blue in the face to win for twenty-five

cents an imitation gun-metal cigarette case *oder* a fifty-cents pocketbook. *Aber* me I am built differencely. Are you coming, Potash?"

"Wait a minute," Abe cried. "What is all this here about?"

"Didn't you hear what the fellow announced it?" Morris asked.

"I ain't acquainted with Hungarian," Abe replied. "So if someone wants to dance themselves blue in the face for a twenty-five-cents cigarette case I want to see what it is."

"It's a dancing contest," Max said, reseating himself. "Judges gets appointed and the *leute* dances for 'em, and which couples the judges says wins, they win."

"*Aber*, who is the judges?" Abe cried.

"Any one the professional asks," Max answered.

Whereupon Abe wanted to know what a professional was, and being informed that he was employed by the hotel management to take charge of the dancing, Abe wagged his head from side to side.

"And for this he gets paid?" he asked.

"I should say he gets paid," Max Margonin replied. "He gives it also lessons on the side. Why, some lunatics here even pays for such lessons ten dollars an hour."

"Oh, that's the fellow, is it?" Abe cried. "He's the one that makes the overhead high, Mawruss, ain't it?"

Morris displayed great presence of mind and remarkable dual control of his muscles, for with one impetus he kicked his partner beneath the table and rapped on top of the table for a waiter.

"More coffee," he said.

"Not for me," Max declared, once more rising to his feet. "I would got a tough enough time sleeping as it is with all the racket here, without I should drink too much coffee besides. So if you and your partner wants to sit here, Morris, go ahead. *Aber* me, I am going for a walk."

Abe winked solemnly at Minnie as Max walked away.

"That fellow knows how to enjoy life," he said, "like a sweatshop worker."

Morris only scowled in reply. "What are you trying to do, Abe," he demanded: "put me in bad?"

"What do you mean—put you in bad?"

"You hear what Uncle Max thinks from fellers dancing, and you want to give me away yet," Morris exclaimed.

"What is the difference?" Abe asked. "He's bound to find it out sooner or later."

"No, he ain't, unless someone tells him," Minnie said.

"You wouldn't be able to keep it from him," Abe said, "after you win them prizes, Mawruss."

"Me win prizes!" Morris cried. "Why, I'm only just a new beginner."

"That's neither here nor there," Abe retorted, "because you are going to dance in these here contests *mit* Mrs. Lessengeld's sister and a couple other good prospects, Mawruss, and you're going to win, too."

Morris laughed raucously.

"And how about the judges?" he asked.

"Ten dollars an hour on the side is slow money for such a short season as they got it here," Abe said; "so you should leave it to me and the feller with the white Tuxedo and pants."

Harold Mendelberg never perspired, even in the warmest weather. Adding to this qualification a firm resolve to avoid the restrictions of a regular job and a real enthusiasm for dancing, it was inevitable that Harold should become a professional dancer. In this capacity he proved a general favourite with the young ladies of the Victoria Hotel, and with such of the older ladies as were not the parents of the young ladies in question, and hence ran no risk of acquiring him

for a son-in-law. Consequently Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lesengeld, who neither hoped nor feared for Miss Pauline Kammer, were outspoken in their praise of Harold.

"Such an elegant behaved young fellow," Lesengeld said to Max Margonin the following morning as they sat on the veranda of the Victoria Hotel. "And comes from good people, too. His father used to was Mendelberg, Reis & Company in Milwaukee."

"I knew him for years already," Uncle Max said. "Everything went against him in business and now he's got a son which is a dancer yet. *Es fehlt nur noch!*"

"What do you mean—*es fehlt nur noch?*" Lesengeld asked. "Harold is a decent, respectable young feller."

"As a stranger, yes," Max replied; "but a professional dancer is no kind of business for a relation to be in, Mr. Lesengeld. For my part, even a gambler is better, because a gambler must anyhow got to got some business ability, while with a dancer, what is it? Am I right or wrong?"

He was distinctly wrong, for at that very moment, in the office of Potash & Perlmutter, Harold was demonstrating the possession of the business ability which Max declared he lacked

by accepting from Abe a check for fifty dollars.

"The idee is this," Abe explained: "If I would get a good strong opening with a concern which is staying at the Victoria, I could sell 'em goods, certain sure."

Harold nodded.

"And the way it is with my experience," Abe continued, "you could entertain a merchant at a theayter and restaurants, but when it comes right straight down to it, Mendelberg, I see more goods sold quick by kissing a baby *oder* patting a little boy on the head in the presence of the father and mother than from all the theayters and restaurants on Broadway put together. Ain't it?"

Harold nodded again.

"And it stands to reason that the older is the children, the more pride the parents has in 'em," Abe went on. "So you take, for example, Miss Herzberg, which her father is Herzberg's Arcade, Bridgetown, *oder* Miss Schoen, a daughter from Schoen Brothers & Company, Toledo, y'understand, and if Mawruss dances with them in a couple contests, understand me, and you would fix it so I am one of the judges and you are another—and any other *schlemiel* can be the third, y'understand—and we give 'em the prize, y'un-

derstand, why, then, old man Herzberg is tickled to pieces, and Adolph Schoen also. In that way I could get there a good strong opening."

"But that would be a pretty raw deal," Harold protested, "considering that Mr. Perlmutter is your partner and you are acting as judge—especially as Mr. Perlmutter don't handle his legs right even for a beginner. Everybody would get wise."

"So long as Herzberg and Schoen got wise I wouldn't worry at all," Abe said.

"But I would," Harold said; "I've got my job to look out for. How would it be if I got you and Mr. Perlmutter to act with me as judges? Then you could both give the prize to Miss Schoen and Miss Herzberg?"

"Sure, I know!" Abe said. "And the girls' partners would be some of these here garment salesmen who are sticking round here and they would get the credit for it and not us. No, Mendelberg, I ain't wasting my time and money getting orders for my competitors."

"Leave that to me," Harold assured him. "I'll introduce the young ladies to their partners, and I'll pick out a couple of guys in the real-estate business or some other line outside of the garment trade."

"*Aber*, how about Miss Kammer?" Abe said.

"It ain't so easy to get a partner for her outside the garment trade, Mendelberg. Because, unless someone would be acquainted with the rating of a concern like Lesengeld & Kammer, he ain't going to take no chances dancing with a lady like Miss Kammer."

"She don't come in the class you mention," Harold said. "Her father and mother ain't staying at the hotel, Mr. Potash."

"They're dead *schon* twenty years ago already," Abe said. "But her sister and brother-in-law take just so much interest in her. Believe me, Mendelberg, any little kindness we could show to Miss Kammer wouldn't be thrown away, neither. In fact, Mendelberg, if me and my partner would be a single man, we would go to work and get Lessengeld & Kammer's trade for the rest of our lives."

"Why, she must be fifty," Harold said, "and she couldn't dance for sour apples."

"She could be seventy and on crutches even," Abe said, "and with the money she's got invested in Lesengeld & Kammer's business, it's worth our while we should give her a prize anyhow."

"All right," Harold said. "Mr. Perlmutter can dance with her in the lucky-number contest. I'll give each couple a number, and when I draw

the numbers out of a bag—see! the last number I draw wins the prize. Mr. Perlmutter's number I put a pinhole in—see? And every time I feel the pinhole I don't draw it out until all the others is drawn out."

"But I don't want to do nothing crooked, Mendelberg," Abe expostulated.

"What's there crooked about it," Mendelberg said, "so long as the hotel management don't have to pay for the prize?"

Abe looked at Harold for more than a minute.

"I get the idee," he said. "And I'll buy them prizes this afternoon yet—a five-dollar pocketbook for Miss Kammer and for Mawruss I'll get an elegant fountain pen. I've been needing one of them things for six months already."

Leon Sammet's views of matrimony were not those of the confirmed misogynist, even though he was fast approaching fifty-five. He merely took the attitude that as a business man with a flourishing business—a trifle under-capitalized—he ought not to touch this last source of monetary accommodation until the occasion warranted it. Thus in 1907, when even gilt-edge paper was unmarketable, and again in 1910, when two large failures coming simultaneously had temporarily embarrassed him, he yearned

for those domestic amenities which could be provided only by a good wife and a father-in-law rated at one hundred to a hundred and twenty-five thousand, credit fair.

He was not entirely mercenery, however, for neither in 1907 nor in 1910 had he contemplated a bride of more than half his age, and until the conversation with Margonin above set forth he had bestowed upon Miss Pauline Kammer only the customary attentions of the manufacturer toward the family of a prosperous retailer. Indeed, all the rest of that day he continued this correct attitude, and his feelings toward Miss Kammer underwent no change. Nor was it until the following morning, when he visited his bank and was asked temporarily to clean up his loans, that the seeds of romance implanted by Max Margonin began to germinate. That afternoon he bought a new pair of white flannel trousers and allowed the barber to singe his hair. Moreover, he performed the remainder of his toilet so carefully that the entire grillroom had concluded its after-dinner coffee before he finally appeared at the border of the dancing floor, and Harold Mendelberg, who was sitting at the Lesengeld table with Mrs. Lesengeld and Miss Kammer, could not conceal his admiration.

"What have you been doing to yourself, Mr.

Sammet?" he said; "you look like a young fellow."

"What do you mean—look like a young fellow?" Sammet demanded angrily.

"He means you anyhow act like one," Lesengeld suggested; and Sammet was about to retort that he didn't act so young as some people acted, but he thought better of it.

"Well," he said, "it's an old saying and a true one—a woman is only so old as she looks and a man as he acts. You know we can't all be kids, Mendelberg."

He glanced quizzically at Miss Kammer, but there was nothing in her manner to denote sympathy, for while she looked straight at his shirt front, her eyes were focussed upon a point miles beyond.

"What time does the contest begin, Mr. Mendelberg?" she said.

"In five minutes," Sammet replied. "Could I have the pleasure with you, Miss Kammer?"

"You're too late, Sammet," said a voice at his elbow. "A popular young lady like Miss Kammer you should ought to ask the night before."

Leon turned in time to see Abe Potash engulf his stubby moustache between his nose and his upper lip in a smile of mingled triumph and

malice. As for Miss Kammer she blushed so vividly at the compliment that for the first time Leon admitted to himself the possibility of a real attachment, leaving altogether out of consideration the matter of banking conditions.

"I didn't know you was taking up dancing at your age, Potash," he said tartly.

Abe raised his eyebrows and made a deprecatory gesture with one hand.

"At my age! Say," he protested, "when it comes right down to ages, Sammet, I leave my partner, Mawruss Perlmutter, he should do the dancing, y'understand, because I could assure you, Sammet, it's no pleasure for Miss Kammer that she should dance with a couple of old timers like you and me, Sammet."

Abe sat down and further enlisted the sympathy of his audience with cigars for Lesengeld and Harold Mendelberg, while Leon retreated to the hotel veranda, where in a secluded corner he composed himself to formulate a telling revenge on Abe and Morris as well as a campaign for his courtship of Miss Kammer. Hardly had he seated himself in one of the porch rockers, however, when he was interrupted by Max Margonin, who was trudging along the piazza in search of a comfortable corner for his evening nap. At his first sight of the white flannel

trousers Max immediately reopened all Leon's wounds.

"*Nu*, Sammet," he said, "you look like a young feller to-night. What's the *simcha?*"

Leon waved both hands in the air. "It's all right, Margonin," he shouted; "I admit it, I'm fifty-five."

"Did I say you weren't?" Max asked.

"What do you all want me to do?" Leon demanded. "Grow a beard and wear an alpaca *caftan?*"

"For my part you could wear a Buster Brown suit," said Max. "What are you so sore about?"

"I ain't sore about nothing," Leon declared. "But when Abe Potash goes to work and in a whole room full of people says I am a back number, y'understand, and that I am too old to dance, Margonin, I got a right to be sore."

"No, you ain't got right, Sammet," said Max. "Potash has got right. You are too old to dance. Any business man is too old to dance. Only a lunatic wants to dance, Sammet."

"Is that so?" Leon retorted. "Well, I suppose Mawruss Perlmutter is a lunatic?"

"He would be if he danced, Sammet; but he don't," Max replied.

"Don't he?" Sammet said.

"He's got too much sense, Sammet," Margonin said. "Morris Perlmutter is my niece's husband, Sammet, and I'm happy to say that I got every confidence in that feller, which you can imagine, Sammet, it's a great satisfaction to me."

"But, Margonin——" Sammet began.

"Because nowadays, Sammet," Max continued, disregarding the interruption, "relations is such loafers, what with oitermobiles and dancing, y'understand, that a feller is practically forced he should leave his money to charity, which before I would see my money go that way, Sammet, I would get married again with a large family of children to worry me that I should never got a peaceful moment again so long as I live."

"But just now," Sammet began again, "Abe Potash says to me——"

"Never mind about Abe Potash," Margonin went on. "Even if I wouldn't got much use for that feller, Sammet, you got to admit he's a good business man, and with a partner like Morris Perlmutter to hold him down, he would——"

"Hold him down!" Sammet exclaimed. "What are you talking, nonsense? If any one of them loafers does the holding down it's Potash,

Margonin. Because when it comes to sporting round, y'understand, it don't make no difference if it is dancing, pinochle, oitermobiles or going on theayters, Margonin, Mawruss Perlmutter is right there every time."

Max shrugged his shoulders and began quietly enough.

"Admitting you are a business man," he said, "why should you knock Morris Perlmutter to me? I'm not his customer, Sammet; I'm his wife's uncle."

"That's your misfortune," Sammet said. But Margonin only recognized the interruption by a slight crescendo.

"Which even though I am willing to believe anything bad about a relation by marriage, Sammet," he continued, gaining force as he proceeded, "coming from a competitor I know it's all lies, and especially the dancing part, Sammet, which I have sat night after night *mit* Mawruss, Sammet, and for all he knows about how to dance, Sammet, he might of got locomotive attacks you in the legs, and that's what for a liar you are, Sammet."

Under the circumstances Sammet exhibited great moderation.

"If you would pass such a remark with some loafers," he said, "they would quick make for

you a blue eye. But it ain't necessary for me to get mad at all, Margonin, because I can prove what I say."

"*Yow*, you can prove what you say!" Margonin jeered.

"All right," Sammet retorted; "I wouldn't argue with you, Margonin. Just come along with me, that's all."

He seized Max by the elbow and walked him round the corner of the veranda until they reached the windows of the grillroom. With one hand he held Margonin's sleeve policeman-fashion, while with the other he pointed to a table at which sat Miss Kammer with Mrs. Lesengeld.

"Keep your eye on that table, Margonin," he said.

"Leggo my arm!" said Margonin, but before he could struggle to free himself Leon released his hold.

"Look!" he cried. "That shows if I'm a liar or not."

Max gasped as he saw Morris Perlmutter approach Miss Kammer, who rose smilingly from the table and placed her hand on his nephew-in-law's shoulder. A moment later Morris grasped her round the waist and they stumped away to the strains of the latest fox trot.

"So I'm a liar, am I?" Leon demanded. But Max made no reply. Indeed, throughout the entire course of that lucky-number contest he remained silently gazing while couple after couple were eliminated by Harold Mendelberg, who stood on a chair in the middle of the dancing floor. As for Leon, he could not restrain his satisfaction, and every time Morris and Miss Kammer came within Margonin's field of vision he nudged Max and demanded anew, with a rising note of triumph, "So I'm a liar, am I?" until Max could stand it no longer.

"Yes, Sammet," he said; "you're a liar, and Perlmutter is a liar and everybody is a liar."

He wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"I'm a liar, too, Sammet," he went on, "because I said I wouldn't do it, but I will."

"Do what?" Leon inquired.

"Get married again," Max replied, and started to walk back to his secluded corner. He had proceeded about a dozen feet when Leon caught up with him.

"Excuse me, Margonin," he said anxiously, "but might I ask if you've got any particular lady in mind?"

Max looked at Sammet, and for the first time he comprehended the true significance of Leon's attire. He felt himself growing suddenly red in

the face, and to cover his confusion he glared ferociously at Leon, to whom Margonin's answer seemed to possess a familiar ring.

"That's my business," Margonin said, and he strode rapidly toward the grillroom entrance.

"Well, Mawruss," Abe cried the following morning, after they had removed their hats and coats, "what did I told you? When you and me give the decision last night to Miss Schoen and that young archyteck in the one-step contest, y'understand, I smiled at Adolph Schoen and he smiled at me. This morning I nailed him on the train, Mawruss, and he's going to give a look in here this afternoon."

Morris beamed with satisfaction.

"The archyteck was a good dancer, Abe," he said.

"*Aber*, the other judge was right, Mawruss," Abe said. "That young lady in the garment which looked like our style 3950, excepting the belt wasn't stitched on the front, Mawruss, danced a whole lot better as Miss Schoen. I don't blame him he wanted to give the prize to her."

"Sure, I don't blame him," Morris retorted. "That's a daughter from Max Lemberg, the Arctic Fur Company, Detroit. You should

have seen to it that instead of a manufacturing furrier, the other judges was in a line like cloth sponging, *oder* coat pads, which don't sell goods to retailers."

"But I told him that Schoen is going to put in a fur department next fall," Abe said.

"Is he?" Morris asked.

"How should I know?" Abe replied. "Do you think Adolph Schoen consults me about such matters?"

"Well, that judge acted all right in the hesitation contest," Morris said. "He didn't kick at all that we give the prize to Miss Herzberg. He said she was way the best dancer in the room."

Abe flipped his fingers impatiently.

"Say, when it comes right down to it, Mawruss, there was other good dancers, too," he said. "But he told me in the strictest confidence that he's been selling for ten years Herzberg's Arcade's fur department and he was scared stiff we would give the prize to somebody else, Mawruss, and if we did done so, Mawruss, Max Herzberg would never of forgave him."

"Our worries whether Max Herzberg forgives that manufacturing furrier or not. The point is, will Herzberg buy a bill of goods maybe?"

"Henry Lesengeld also," Abe said.

"I bet you," Morris said fervently. "I took

enough chances on account of Miss Kammer. Every moment I expected to see Uncle Max come into the room."

Abe shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you bother your head about that feller for, Mawruss?" he protested. "Suppose he does find out you're dancing, Mawruss, the most he will do is to pass a couple cutting remarks *und fertig*."

"Cutting remarks I can stand," Mawruss said. "*Aber*—— Why, how do you do, Mr. Lesengeld?"

He jumped to his feet and ran toward the elevator, from which Henry Lesengeld had just alighted.

"What brought you here so early, Mr. Lesengeld?" Abe asked, and winked furtively at Morris.

"Well, I'll tell you," Lesengeld replied. "I wanted to——"

"Come inside and sit down," Abe said, leading the way into the office.

"But I wanted to see," Lesengeld continued, "in particular——"

"Our lines we will show you later," Abe cried. "Mawruss, the cigars!"

"Never mind the cigars," Lesengeld protested. "I called to see Perlmutter."

"Well, you catch us both in," Abe replied, somewhat chagrined. "Me and my partner we got no jealousies one from the other, Mr. Lesengeld. We each sell our share of the goods here."

Lesengeld waved both hands at Abe.

"What do you mean—goods?" he said. "I want to talk to Perlmutter a little something private, Potash, if you don't mind."

"You want to talk to me private?" Morris said. "But I ain't got nothing private from my partner, Mr. Lesengeld. So fire ahead."

For a moment Lesengeld hesitated.

"All right," he said at last. "If you want me to do so I will do so."

He cleared his throat impressively.

"I should like to ask you simply a question, Perlmutter," he said. "The question is from the financial standing of Mister Margonin."

Morris and Abe exchanged puzzled glances.

"Uncle Max is all right," Morris replied at last. "Uncle Max has got money, Mr. Lesengeld. Whatever Uncle Max buys he can afford to pay for."

"*Aber* when you say he's got money, Perlmutter," Lesengeld continued, "you must understand that my sister-in-law, Miss Pauline Kammer, has got also money, y'understand, and unless Max Margonin is got at the lowest

estimate twice so much as my sister-in-law got it, then what is the use of talking?"

The colour left Morris's face and he sat down heavily in his chair.

"Excuse me, Mr. Lesengeld," Abe said. "What has Max Margonin got to do with Miss Kammer?"

Lesengeld appeared to grow slightly indignant.

"Of course, Potash," he said, "if you and Perlmutter is got such a copartnership agreement which goes share and share alike on relations as well as stock and fixtures, y'understand, I couldn't kick exactly. At the same time I should like to know what is it your business if Max Margonin asks me that he wants to marry my sister-in-law?"

"Max Margonin asks you he should marry Miss Kammer!" Morris cried. "When was this he asked you?"

"Last night late," Lesengeld replied; "and I must say, Perlmutter, that I think Margonin is right. When a couple of fellers like you and Potash goes to work and gives a prize to a daughter from Schoen Brothers & Company, y'understand, which this morning I hear it that Schoen is opening across the street from me in Cincinnati a branch from their Toledo store,

y'understand, then all I can say is, Perlmutter, you couldn't expect otherwise."

"Couldn't expect what otherwise?" Morris asked.

"Why, Margonin says he was watching you last night for pretty near half an hour, and he says the longer you are dancing there the more he sees it you ain't to be depended upon, y'understand. So he makes up his mind then and there that what is the use staying single for the sake of relations which after he is dead—God forbid!—would play with his money like marbles already."

"But I was dancing with Miss Kammer," Morris protested.

"Even so," Lesengeld retorted. "You weren't doing me no favours, Perlmutter, and don't you think so for a moment, neither."

There was a brief silence, during which Morris moistened his parched lips and gazed reproachfully at his partner.

"This is your idee, Abe," he croaked at last.

"What do you mean—my idee?" Abe asked. "Was it my idee you should take from that loafer dancing lessons, Mawruss? Did I do the reckoning from overhead expenses? What the devil you are talking nonsense?"

Lesengeld shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly.

"It don't make no difference whose idee the idee was," he declared. "The question is: Has Mister Max Margonin got from the lowest estimate one hundred thousand dollars, Perlmutter? Otherwise I would advise her she should accept Leon Sammet and be done with it."

It was now Abe's turn to grow pale.

"Accept Leon Sammet!" he cried in anguished tones, and Lesengeld nodded.

"He is also wanting to marry my sister-in-law," he explained.

Abe Potash gulped convulsively and laid an emphatic forefinger on Lesengeld's knee.

"Then let me tell you something, Mr. Lesengeld," he said: "Max Margonin is a very rich man, Mr. Lesengeld."

At the words "very rich" he twice sank his forefinger up to the second knuckle in the fatty layer above Mr. Lesengeld's right sartorial muscle.

"A very rich man, Mr. Lesengeld," he continued. "Some people which is considered millionaires should have Max Margonin's money, Mr. Lesengeld, and I wouldn't mind to *schenck* my worst enemy the overestimate."

At this evidence of his partner's treachery Morris could not restrain a heavy groan, which Lesengeld mistook for involuntary corroboration of Abe's statement. He therefore felt that the object of his visit had been attained, and reached for his hat.

"I believe you, Potash," he said, "and to show you I ain't got no hard feelings against you boys I will give you something a little advice." He paused impressively on his way to the elevator door.

"For a business man," he said, "dancing is nix."

After his departure Abe and Morris sat for at least ten minutes without making a sound.

"Well, what did I tell you when you started to learn, Mawruss?" Abe said at last.

Morris groaned again.

"You are shedding my blood, Abe," he declared.

"Me shedding your blood?" Abe cried. "Could you expect me I should sit still and let Leon Sammet get away with that elegant *shidduch?* Do you want you should lose Margonin's money and Lesengeld's account both?"

He rose to his feet and placed his hand on Morris's shoulder.

"When you consider what you're up against

in the way of competition from charities and ladies, Mawruss, to say nothing of Margonin's good health," he concluded, "there's a sight more money in selling goods as waiting for rich relations to die on you, Mawruss, and don't you forget it."

On the following evening no one could have accused Leon Sammet of looking like a young fellow as he sat at his table in the empty dining room of the Victoria Hotel. For there were no white trousers and clean shave to minimize the ravages of his fifty-five years. He had purposely restricted his toilet to a mere hand washing and had foregone shaving so that he might be early enough to view the arrival of Abe and Morris and thus derive a little comfort from their chagrined appearance. But he was destined to be disappointed.

Promptly at a quarter past seven Abe appeared at the dining-room door, and though there was much anxiety in his manner there was very little of chagrin. Even this air of anxiety disappeared after the head waiter had nodded vigorously and had pointed to a large round table in the corner of the dining room, which Leon observed to bear a quantity of flowers and glassware. There were eight places laid, and

by the side of one of the chairs reposed an ice-bucket, from which protruded the necks of two bottles crowned with gold foil.

Hardly had Leon ceased to wonder at these preparations when Abe reappeared at the doorway, heading a small procession of seven people who seated themselves at the round table in apparently prearranged order. Abe sat down by the champagne bucket. At his right was seated Max Margonin. Next to Max sat Minnie Perlmutter and then came Henry Lesengeld, Mrs. Potash, Morris Perlmutter, and Mrs. Lesengeld. The chair on Abe's left remained vacant, however.

"She says she will be down in a few minutes," Mrs. Lesengeld explained.

"There's no hurry," Abe assured her, and then he turned to Max with an amiable smile. "You've got to get used to such things, Mr. Margonin," he continued. "When me and my Rosie goes out together, y'understand, between the time she says she is just putting on her hat and the time when she does put on her hat, y'understand, I could figure up costs on sixty styles already—including the overhead."

Margonin grunted in reply. He had been so completely surprised by the compliant attitude of Morris and Minnie, and they had exhibited

such enthusiasm over his impending marriage, that he had begun to wonder whether or not he had been a trifle impetuous in his love-making.

"My poor wife *olav hasholom* was the same way," he said, and heaved a melancholy sigh. "Many's the time she kept me waiting, Potash, because we used to go out together a whole lot. We was great companions."

Morris coughed by way of heading off these untimely reminiscences, but the ruse failed of its effect.

"She was very fond of going on the theayter," Max continued. "She loved it especially moving pictures, because she said if you was going to spend money going on theayters, a moving pictures is just so much good for passing away an evening, y'understand, and you save anyhow one dollar and forty cents."

Mrs. Lesengeld sniffed audibly.

"Some people is pretty economical," she said, and Morris again coughed, but to no purpose.

"Not that she was economical in the house," Max went on. "A better table as my poor Leah *olav hasholom* set, Mrs. Lesengeld, nobody ever sat down—I don't care he could be Abraham Carnegie even."

"I wonder what's keeping your sister," Abe broke in hurriedly.

"Perhaps I'd better send a waiter up to find out," Mrs. Lesengeld said, and after this was done Max resumed his in-memoriam conversation.

"Everything she cooked herself," he began; "for hours she stands on the kitchen range and I says to her, 'Mommer,' I says—I always called her mommer even she wouldn't got no children—'Mommer, why don't you let the girl attend to that *gedampfte Kalbfleisch?'* Which I can assure you, Mrs. Lesengeld, I never expect to eat such *gedampfte Kalbfleïsch* any more, Mrs. Lesengeld, no matter how many times I would get married again."

Mrs. Lesengeld grew crimson and her sniff became a veritable snort.

"And she said to me, 'Popper,' she said, 'you could get fifty girls in the kitchen,' she said, 'and——'"

"Miss Kammer is not in her room," the head waiter interrupted.

"Then see if she is round the veranda or in the lobby," Mrs. Lesengeld said, "and for heaven's sake serve the soup or something."

"Sure, let's have the soup right away," Margonin agreed. "I'm pretty near starving already."

Accordingly the soup was served and the

empty soup plates were removed, but the seat at Abe's left hand remained vacant.

"I wonder where she can be," Mrs. Lesengeld said, and her worried expression was reflected round the table, except upon the face of Max Margonin.

"It reminds from an experience I had when me and my poor Leah *olav hasholom* was one summer in Long Branch. We was sitting in the dining room one night when——"

At this juncture the head waiter returned.

"Miss Kammer has went to the city," he announced.

"Went to the city!" Lesengeld exclaimed. "She couldn't have went to the city."

"And left this here note for Mrs. Lesengeld," the head waiter continued.

He handed a sealed envelope to Mrs. Lesengeld, who ripped it open at once.

"As I was saying," Max continued, "we was sitting in the dining room one night when——"

His narrative was again interrupted, and this time by Mrs. Lesengeld, who attempted to rise from her chair. She clutched at the tablecloth, her face as colourless as the exigencies of a modern toilet permit, and the next moment she sank to the floor, dragging with her seven sets of glassware, knives, forks, and plates. In the excite-

ment that followed, only Abe remained calm. With a view to a refund he at once withdrew the champagne bottles from the ice-bucket and placed them on an adjoining table. Then he picked up the letter which Mrs. Lesengeld had dropped, and while all the attention centred on that lady he scanned its contents unnoticed. It read as follows:

MY DEAR SISTER:

Harold Mendelberg and I have decided we will get married. He looks young for his age. He is thirty-seven. We are going to New York to-night and will be in Cincinnati Thursday. He is not so much younger than I am. Please express my trunks to the Geltmont Hotel, New York City. Everybody mistakes him for twenty-five, but he is really thirty-seven. We are going to be very happy.

Your loving sister,

PAULINE.

P. S. He is going to grow a beard and then he will look his real age, which is thirty-seven.

During the middle of their fall shipping season a few months later, the morning activities of Abe and Morris were interrupted by the arrival of a visitor with a neat Vandyke beard.

"How do you do, Mr. Potash?" he said.

"How are you, Mr. —er—er——" Abe replied.

"You don't remember me," the visitor said.

"Your clothes is familiar," Abe said, "but I don't recognize your face."

"That's because I've grown a beard," the newcomer said, and a wave of recollection broke over Abe.

"It does make you look older," he said. "I mean it makes you look a whole lot older." He exchanged a perfunctory handshake with Harold Mendelberg. "Still learning the *Leute* to dance, I suppose?" he said rather frigidly.

"With Pauline's money all invested in Lesengeld & Kammer's store!" Harold exclaimed. "I should say not. I am now buyer for their cloak and suit department."

Forthwith Abe began to wring Mendelberg's hand until the latter's eyes filled with tears.

"Mawruss!" he yelled. "Come here quick. An old friend of ours has came—Harold Mendelberg."

"What do you mean—an old friend?" Morris said as he walked slowly forward.

"Sure!" Abe cried excitedly. "He is now buying goods for Lesengeld & Kammer."

Morris immediately broke into a run. "Why, how do you do, Mr. Mendelberg?" he shouted. "Ain't it a pleasure to see you? Come right in and sit down and we'll have a little talk over old times yet."

Harold avoided a second handshake by pulling off his gloves.

"Business before pleasure, Perlmutter," he said. "I've come in to look over your goods."

"Why, zoitainly," Abe assured him, and led the way to the showroom, where in less than two hours Harold made a generous selection of Potash & Perlmutter's fall line.

"Well, Perlmutter," he said after cigars had been passed round, "I suppose your wife's Uncle Max is feeling pretty sore at me."

"*Oser a Stück!*" Morris declared. "In fact, he feels you've done him a favour—I mean he feels that perhaps it was all for the best. An old man like him ain't got no call to get married again, Mr. Mendelberg."

"Sure, he ain't," Abe said, winking at Harold, "not when your wife is his only niece."

Morris shrugged his shoulders angrily.

"For my part she could be his only daughter, Abe," he retorted, "and it wouldn't make no difference to me. I live to please myself, Abe, not relations nor partners neither." He turned almost defiantly to Harold Mendelberg.

"You must come up and eat dinner with Minnie and me, Mr. Mendelberg," he said; "and h'afterwards, might you would do us a favour and show us a couple of new steps in the fox trot?"

SUCH A MOTHER!

"WHEN it comes to moral risks, Mr. Noblestone, I got one rule," said Marcus Fine, President of the Board of the Kosciusko National Bank, "and that is never to recommend the acceptance of a loan to somebody which ain't got a wife to support which it very often happens that before a business man makes a statement to his bank he's got to consider what's going to happen him in case he fools us on his bills receivable or something, and believe me, Mr. Noblestone, many a time we got saved from making a loan on account some shaky proposition has got a wife depending on him. Sisters they ain't so particular about. A sister they figure could maybe look out for herself, but nobody wants to take a chance on Atlanta if his wife is going to be up against it. Am I right or wrong?"

Harris Noblestone, the business broker, agreed to this statement of business policy with a sort of palsied nodding of his head. He would have agreed to anything Mr. Fine might have said

anyway, for in addition to being President of the Board, Mr. Fine was also Chairman of the Loan and Discount Committee of the bank, and as such controlled the destinies of at least three quarters of Harris Noblestone's clientèle.

"But how about a mother?" Noblestone asked.

"Has Bleistift got a mother?" Mr. Fine asked, and it seemed to Noblestone that a change came over the banker's face.

Now Mr. Noblestone knew only as much of his client's, Charles Bleistift's, history as could be derived from one interview in which Bleistift said that if Noblestone succeeded in procuring a commercial loan for him of twenty thousand dollars, he would be glad to pay the business broker a commission of 10 per cent. and disbursements; but as Mr. Fine had evinced what for him was such a keen interest in the matter, Noblestone not only assumed that his client possessed a mother but found no difficulty in eloquently visualizing her for Mr. Fine.

"Has he got a mother?" the business broker exclaimed. "You should have such a mother, Mr. Fine."

To Noblestone's astonishment, the banker's cold gray eyes filled with tears. "I did have," Fine said, "and to-day I've got *Jahrzeit* for her."

"I wish you long life," Noblestone said piously. "You must have lost her only a year ago to-day, the way you feel about it."

"As a matter of fact it was forty years ago to-day," Fine said. "And I ain't never forgotten her nor never shall." The banker pulled his watch out of his pocket and opened the case. "This is her picture," he said, unhooking the watch from the chain and handing it to Noblestone.

"Ain't that a quincidence!" the business broker exclaimed. "It's an absolute ringer, if you'll excuse me taking the liberty, Mr. Fine, for Bleistift's mother—the same eyes and everything." He handed the watch back to Mr. Fine. "And the way that boy treats her, Mr. Fine," he continued. "You wouldn't believe at all. Like a queen already!"

"You don't say so!" Fine said.

"Every night he stays home with her," Noblestone proceeded lyrically, "except when he takes her to theayters or by moving pictures, and at least three times a day he rings her up to see how things is going at home."

"Is that a fact!" Fine murmured. "How old did you say she was?"

"About the same age as your poor mother, *selig*," Noblestone replied promptly.

"She wasn't fifty hardly," Fine said, "and a very beautiful woman, *olav hasholom*."

"Well, I shouldn't say that Mrs. Bleistift was a day over fifty," Noblestone went on, "and smart—like a whip. All her own housework she does, and naturally it don't cost the boy much to live. Practically all the money he makes he puts back into the business, because as I've heard Mrs. Bleistift say any number of times, if a woman knows how to manage, y'understand, eighteen dollars a week housekeeping money, even nowadays, is plenty."

"And I bet she's a good cook, too," Fine added.

"A good cook!" Noblestone cried rapturously. "Listen, Mr. Fine! I was up there to the house the other day and had dinner with them, and I ate for the first time in twenty-five years *tzimmas* which was really and truly something you could call without lying *tzimmas*."

"Only twenty-five years," Fine said. "I ain't tasted *tzimmas* in forty years—not really and truly *tzimmas*, because the *tzimmas* which my poor mother, *olav hasholom*, made it, Noblestone, at the best hotel in New York you couldn't get it."

Not only his eyes but his mouth watered as he thought of the delectable stew compounded of meat, potatoes, carrots, apples, and onions,

which in the vernacular of Delancey Street is called *tzimmas*.

"I don't doubt it in the least," Noblestone assured him, "but just the same this was already wonderful *trimmas*, and afterwards we had some *apfel kuchen* which melted it in your mouth like Grade A certified cream already."

Mr. Fine wiped his eyes and swallowed the moisture accumulated during the business broker's last flight of imagination.

"Well, I'll tell you, Noblestone," he said, "bring this here Bleistift around here and I'll see what I can do for him." He rose ponderously by way of concluding the interview. "And I wouldn't object to meeting his mother, neither," he added, "because if she's all what you say she is, Noblestone, I've a good mind to take a chance on this loan."

"When will I tell Bleistift he should call?" Noblestone asked.

"Any time to-morrow," Fine replied, "and he shouldn't forget to bring his mother along."

"Sure! Sure!" Noblestone said in vibrant, confident tones. "They'll be here to-morrow afternoon without fail."

He grasped Mr. Fine's hand and shook it vigorously. At the same time he looked Fine straight in the eye, for it is an axiom in business

circles that a hearty handclasp, a vibrant voice, and a clear eye characterize a good moral risk as well, of course, as the broker of a good moral risk. However, when Noblestone visited his client's place of business half an hour later, while his voice was just as vibrant, his gaze as steady, and his handclasp as hearty, the note of confidence was lacking.

For the first time it occurred to Noblestone that he had gone a bit too far in the matter of Bleistift's mother. That she might not look like the photograph in Fine's watch case could be explained on the score of Noblestone's faulty memory, but that Bleistift looked like a man who stayed home every night, or even every other night, could not be explained on any score.

"Well, Noblestone," Bleistift said, "did you see him?"

Noblestone nodded, a trifle gloomily. There was something about the cut of Bleistift's one-button, high-waisted sack suit, his bright-coloured necktie, his suède-topped shoes, and above all his small toothbrush moustache, which made Noblestone wonder if, after all, Bleistift really and truly was good to his mother. In fact, when he noted that the handkerchief in Bleistift's breast pocket exactly matched Bleistift's brilliant necktie, he began to doubt that Bleistift's

mother exerted any influence at all over her son. Certainly, an old-fashioned mother such as he had described to Fine would not without protest have permitted her son to wear a fourteen-dollar silk shirt with red and yellow hair stripes.

Noblestone's voice therefore was not only vibrant when he replied to Bleistift's question, but also a trifle hoarse. "Yes, I seen him," he replied.

"And what did he say?" Bleistift queried.

"He said," Noblestone answered, "that you should come there to-morrow afternoon and bring with you your mother."

"My mother!" Bleistift exclaimed.

"Sure!" Noblestone said. "She ain't sick, is she?"

"What do you mean—sick?" Bleistift cried. "My mother fell off a Madison Street horse-car thirty years ago already, without a cent of insurance."

"You mean you ain't got no mother?" Noblestone almost shrieked.

"Didn't I just told you?" Bleistift said. "The company offered to settle with my old man for five hundred dollars, but he was pig-headed and when it came to trial they pretty near proved it on him that he shoved her off. Anyhow, he didn't get a cent."

"But what are you going to do about it?" Noblestone said.

"What can I do about it—after thirty years?" Bleistift retorted.

"You don't understand what I mean," Noblestone said. "To-morrow afternoon before three o'clock you've got to be at the bank with your mother because this here Fine don't lend no money unless the party has got a wife or a mother, and naturally since you ain't got no wife, I told him you had a mother."

"But how can I be at his office to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock with a mother if I ain't got one?" Bleistift insisted.

"That's up to you," Noblestone said.

"Up to me?" Bleistift cried. "Can I go out on the street and grab a mother or ring one up by a telegraph company like getting a messenger already? Furthermore, Mr. Noblestone, I ain't no crook. I've got here assets which should get me an accommodation by any bank for at least twenty thousand dollars if I would be raised in an incubator even, so therefore, Mr. Noblestone, if this here crank of a president wants I should have a mother in addition to my stock in trade, fixtures and bills receivable, y'understand, all I can say is that the deal is off."

"Is that so!" Noblestone retorted. "And I

should sacrifice my commissions and everything, when for a hundred dollars a week I could get you all the mothers you want."

"A hundred dollars a week!" Bleistift repeated.

"Sure!" Noblestone said. "For a hundred dollars a week I could get you a first-class, A-number-one mother, and how long would you need such a mother? Two weeks the outside."

Bleistift passed his hand distractedly over his forehead. "Excuse me, Mr. Noblestone," he murmured. "Are you *meshuggeh* or am I?"

"I'm *meshuggeh* like a fox," Noblestone said. "How do you think I make a showing for stores which ain't got no customers when the owner wants to sell out? I hire them, and if doctors and dentists want to dispose of their practises and ain't got no patients, for five dollars apiece I can get sick people, people with toothaches and people without no teeth at all, and every one of them acting so natural that it would fool any purchaser."

"And is this what you would call being on the level, Mr. Noblestone?" Bleistift asked.

"Why ain't it?" Noblestone demanded. "What one doctor can't make a go of, another doctor could coin money at in the self-same office.

This also applies to dentists and storekeepers, Mr. Bleistift, which I could show you any number of people I sold businesses to and all of them making a good living, and they never would of closed the deal if I hadn't hired those actors from Louis Gittelman's theayter."

"Actors from Louis Gittelman's theayter!" Bleistift cried. "And you want me I should get for a mother an actress from Louis Gittelman's theayter?"

"Well, where do you want to get her?" Noblestone asked. "The Metropolitan Opera House?"

"But if we hired such an actress, Noblestone, would that guarantee the loan of twenty thousand from Fine?"

"Leave that to me," Noblestone said. "We will go over to Gittelman's right now, and if I don't pick out a good, snappy mother, Bleistift, it'll be on me."

Half an hour later they entered the office of Louis Gittelman on lower Second Avenue.

"Mr. Gittelman," Noblestone said, "shake hands with Mr. Bleistift in the garment business."

"Sure!" Gittelman said. "But if he expects to get phony customers from me at less than six dollars a head, Noblestone, I'll also kiss him good-bye in the garment business for all of me."

"Did I say he wanted phony customers?" asked the business broker.

"I didn't say you did," Gittelman retorted, "but the last time you got them from me, I made you special rates on account it was a restaurant, Noblestone, and the same night six of them actors come down with putnam poisoning. The union pretty near called a strike on me, which while most actors will eat pretty near anything when it don't cost 'em nothing, Noblestone, an actor ain't got exactly an iron stomach, neither."

"Listen, Gittelman," Noblestone interrupted, "you've got us wrong. What we want is an actress, not an actor—a good, first-class, A-number-one mother."

"Oh, a mother!" Gittelman exclaimed. "A mother is a horse of another colour, Noblestone. In fact, I could use a good, first-class, A-number-one mother myself."

"You could?" Noblestone cried. "Why, what's the matter with Yetta Saranov?"

"I'm firing her," Gittelman replied.

Noblestone looked quite shocked.

"Why, you must be crazy!" he said. "Only last week I seen her in this theayter, Gittelman, and if she don't act an elegant mother, Gittelman, then I'm no judge."

"I didn't say you was," Gittelman assured

him, "but how she acts ain't the question. It's how she looks. Can you imagine this, Noblestone? Ever since that woman was twenty-one, she has been playing for me mothers at anyhow two hundred and five pounds, and last year all of a sudden she gets the idea she is too fat. The result is she goes to work and reduces forty pounds on me, and if you can show me a woman as good-looking as Saranov, twenty-eight years old, who can put over any kind of a mother at one hundred and sixty-five pounds, she's got to be a Bernhardt or anyhow Bertha Kalisch."

"Is that so!" cried a voice as vibrant as any moral commercial risk of the highest probity, except that this was a feminine and not a masculine voice. It proceeded from the half-closed door of Gittelman's office, which was immediately and violently flung open to admit Yetta Saranov herself.

"Act downstairs after half-past eight tonight, Yetta," Gittelman said calmly. "You wouldn't get no hand here, no matter how good you work."

"I ain't looking for no hand from you, Gittelman," Yetta Saranov cried. Her round cheeks were flushed and her large eyes grew not only larger, but of such a liquid brownness that Bleis-

tift, who was quite alone in rising to his feet at her entrance, automatically straightened the lapels of his coat and smoothed down his already burnished hair.

"You I don't never expect to work for again after my two weeks' notice has run out," Yetta continued, "but if you are trying to give these gentlemen the idea that I couldn't play just so good a mother as I ever played, let me tell you there is lawyers, Gittelman, and I've got this here party for a witness. He wouldn't lie for your benefit, Gittelman. He's too much of a gentleman, I can see that."

Here she turned on Bleistift such a melting glance that the palpitation of his heart was almost apparent through his tight-fitting coat and vest.

"Keep your shirt on, Yetta," Gittelman counselled. "I distinctly told these here gentlemen that you played a good mother, but it ain't how you play, it's what you weigh."

"You don't tell me!" Yetta said. "Well, I've been living for eight years now with Mrs. Gubin, and if she ain't a mother in looks and acts, then I don't know a mother when I see one. She's been a mother to me, anyhow, and I make up after her, Gittelman, the same wig, the same

clothes and everything, and she's just the same height and weight that I am now and what do you know about *that!*"

"You mean Mrs. Gubin, the husband used to was Sam Gubin kept the pickle stand corner of Suffolk and Delancey?" Noblestone asked, and Yetta nodded through her tears.

"Why, I've known her for twenty years, Gittelman," Noblestone said, "and if this lady is as good a performer as you say, and makes up the same like Mrs. Gubin and everything, then I think you're all wrong, Gittelman. You couldn't have no better mother type than Mrs. Gubin."

"She ain't only a type," Yetta sobbed. "She's a real mother. Can you beat this, gentlemen? For a whole year now I've had to fight that woman she shouldn't cook such good food for me. All my will-power I had to use to keep from eating it, and when I manage to get down to a hundred and sixty-five pounds, he goes to work and fires me yet!" She sobbed aloud in her distress. "Since the old man died, my board money is all Mrs. Gubin's got to live on," she added, "and if I don't work, she'll starve."

"Then you won't have to use no more will-power," Gittelman said unfeelingly. "You can get thin without it. Furthermore, Yetta, I got it on good authority, y'understand, that practi-

cally every Monday morning you're seen not only coming out of the savings bank, but you ain't above buying once in a while a good second mortgage if the bonus is right."

It was at this juncture that Yetta almost ruined her reputation with Noblestone as a performer of mother rôles by giving way to an indignation so violent in its character that Mrs. Siddons or Charlotte Cushman herself could not have managed it without risk of apoplexy. However, Bleistift was far beyond the stage where anything Yetta might do would affect his judgment about hiring her as his mother, and when at length she passed from violent indignation to a pathetic resignation, characterized by irregular sobs of what to Bleistift were of the most heartbreaking intensity, he could not resist patting her well-rounded shoulders by way of consolation.

"Now listen, Miss Saranov," he said, "you'll make yourself ill, and besides, Mr. Noblestone here wants to explain to you just what it is that we want you to do for us."

Once more Yetta favoured Bleistift with a liquid glance of her large brown eyes, to which she added a faint smile and a slight pressure upon the palm of Bleistift's right hand.

"I don't know what it is," she murmured,

"but whatever you want from me, I'll do my best." Here her voice grew much stronger. "And no matter what this knocker tells you," she continued, nodding at Gittelman, "if it's a mother part, I'll eat it up."

"Well, you've got to eat something up and take on anyhow thirty pounds, if you want to play mothers in this theayter, I'll tell you that," Gittelman said, and ten minutes later, by way of beginning her new diet, Yetta Saranov sat eating *mohn kuchen* up and drinking coffee in the Café de la Paix on lower Second Avenue, while Noblestone and Bleistift explained to her the lines and business of the rôle they expected her to perform for Mr. Fine's benefit the following afternoon.

There for half an hour Yetta munched and nodded sympathetically, occasionally patting Bleistift's hand to reassure him that she was fast becoming letter-perfect in her part, and to every hand pat Bleistift thrilled in a most unfilial fashion. His feelings were not even fraternal, and by the time most of the details of their intrigue had been decided upon, he was responding to Yetta's maternal advances with little hand pats of his own. Once, indeed, he held her hand for so long a time that Noblestone felt constrained to interfere in the matter.

"Of course, Bleistift," he said, "you will un-

derstand that while Miss Saranov is acting a mother, you've got to be a son, y'understand, and behave as such."

Yetta gently withdrew her hand from Bleistift's grasp. "I'll coach him," she said. "I'll give him plenty of pointers how a son should ought to behave, and there is one thing which I want to mention right here and now."

Once more she flashed on Bleistift a tender glance, but it was only for the purpose of softening what was to follow.

"It's bad enough in a regular show that when things don't go right the opening night, the manager is out what it costs him to put on the show, y'understand," she began, "but if this here show flops which we are putting on, then right away you are out twenty thousand dollars, ain't it?"

Noblestone nodded sadly. At that moment ten dollars would have bought his 10 per cent. interest in his leading man, who was gazing upon Miss Saranov with such lover-like intensity that in ordinary circumstances she would have insisted upon his being replaced by a more competent actor. However, Miss Saranov herself was beginning to lose the spirit of her part, and to experience sensations which were not precisely maternal.

"So therefore," Yetta continued with an effort, "I want to say this to you, Mr. Bleistift: it ain't enough that I should act this part and that you should act up to me, y'understand. It's also necessary that we should dress it right. Now me, for instance. I would wear my regular Mrs. Gubin make-up, only I would tone it down because I take it they ain't going to have no baby spots in that bank where we pull this off."

She paused and cleared her throat.

"And you, Mr. Bleistift," she went on, "you've also got to dress the part." She narrowed her eyes and pretended to survey him critically. "Now I would say that you should ought to wear a plain business suit in a blue serge, cut conservative," she said, "with a plain blue tie, black socks, a soft white shirt, and," she added with an unconscious gesture of her right hand, "for heaven's sake, get a shampoo and brush your hair like a human being—I mean a business man."

He looked so crestfallen that she was again obliged to pat his hand.

"You don't mind my saying them things?" she said. "It's only because I have the interests of the show at heart. The kind of mother I put over don't call for no fashionable son. The idea is that he is dressing to make a hit with me and

not with women much younger than me—or anyhow much younger than I am supposed to be."

The result of this conversation was that on the following afternoon at a quarter to three two people entered the severely Doric portals of the Kosciusko Bank—two people so different from the couple who had taken coffee with him the previous afternoon that Noblestone, who had arrived before, failed to recognize either.

One of them was a woman slightly past middle life, becomingly attired in a lace shawl of a quiet design and a demure black hat; the other, obviously her son, wore a plain blue serge suit, and when he removed a black derby hat, his hair was soft and wavy, parted on one side and brushed carelessly back from a wide high forehead. It may also be said in passing that his shoes were dark tan throughout and disclosed black socks that were not even silk.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Noblestone," the mother said in a voice which precisely matched the lace shawl and demure hat. It was low-pitched and gentle, and so completely baffled Noblestone that she was obliged to rouse him into action with a most ungentle wink of her right eye.

"Oh! How do you do, Mrs. Bleistift!" Noblestone cried. "*And* Mr. Bleistift."

He waved them into Marcus Fine's private office, where Fine himself drew forward his most comfortable padded chair and carefully assisted her to sink into it.

"Mr. Fine," Noblestone announced, "this here is the party I spoke to you about by the name of Bleistift."

Fine shook hands with Bleistift, who was so modest in his demeanour that Yetta began to feel the scene was sagging a little.

"And this," Noblestone continued, "is his mother, Mrs. Bleistift."

If, however, Yetta had any misgivings about how the show was going, she lost them entirely when Fine took her extended hand. Almost reverently he exerted a gentle pressure. In fact, his instinct was to kiss the tips of her fingers as though she had been royalty itself, but fortunately for Bleistift and Noblestone he refrained from doing so and therefore failed to detect the one blemish in Yetta's make-up. Her nails were carefully manicured and showed no such traces of cooking and housework as characterized the finger-tips of her model, Mrs. Gubin.

"Mr. Noblestone told me a lot about you," Fine said, "and I must say your son looks a credit to you."

"I done my best," Yetta replied. "Which I

promised my poor husband that I would bring the boy up he should be a good business man and a merchant the same like he was himself, and I think I done so."

"His financial statements will show all that," Noblestone said hurriedly. He felt that Yetta was treading on dangerous ground. "He's got them statements with him."

Bleistift immediately handed them to Fine, who for the moment became once more a typical chairman of a loan and discount committee with a face of the latest steel construction throughout, as expressionless as the round door of a burglar-proof safe deposit vault with the time lock set.

"These statements," Fine said after a trying five minutes had elapsed, "if true, are extremely satisfactory." He laid them on his desk and smiled at Yetta. "And all I can say is," he continued, "that with such a mother, I don't believe a business man would take a chance on making them if they wasn't true."

"Even without such a mother, I wouldn't take the chance," Bleistift said so positively that Yetta almost shook her head and frowned, for this last line was not in Bleistift's part as agreed upon in advance. Neither was Fine's rejoinder.

"And without such a mother as you've got,

Bleistift," he said severely, "I wouldn't take a chance with the bank's money neither, so it's a stand-off." He turned again to Yetta and his manner became more gracious. "You see, Mrs. Bleistift," he explained, "your son ain't as yet a depositor in our bank, and if I would buy his paper naturally, I've got to make some further investigations." He cleared his throat impressively. "I would like," he announced, "to visit him and you in your home."

"Why, certainly!" Noblestone exclaimed with confidence—in fact, with much more confidence than he felt.

"You see, Noblestone," Fine proceeded with a somewhat forced cordiality, "if you visit people in their homes and eat a meal with them or so, it places an entirely different complexion on the matter."

Yetta glanced down at her finger-nails and hurriedly put on a pair of white cotton gloves.

"I understand from Noblestone, Mrs. Bleistift," Fine said, "that you are famous for your *tzimmas*."

At this painful juncture Yetta's training in Second Avenue stock with a weekly change of bill stood her in good stead. Here was a cue as foreign to the part as though it had been interpolated from a comedy by George M. Cohan

into a drama by Sholem Asch, but she picked it up immediately nevertheless.

"*Tzimmas* ain't no company food, Mr. Fine," she said, as promptly as though she were modestly disclaiming a real talent as a *cordon bleu*, whereas in point of fact she had never learned how to boil a potato. Nor indeed had she or even Bleistift been informed by Noblestone that he had ever so much as mentioned *tzimmas* to Fine.

"*Tzimmas* is good enough company food for me," Fine declared jovially. "What night did you say I should come?"

"How about next Wednesday?" Noblestone suggested.

"That suits me!" Fine declared. "Shall we say seven o'clock?"

"Seven o'clock would be splendid," Yetta replied with every appearance of cordiality, although inwardly she was gasping for air.

"And what did you say the address was?" Fine insisted.

Bleistift looked at Noblestone with the despairing gaze of the cramped and sinking swimmer, and in the brief silence which followed he began to perspire profusely, but once again Yetta held up the scene.

"Why, we're pretty old-fashioned people, Mr.

Fine," she said, "so if you don't mind travelling way over to the East Side for such poor food like I cook it, we live at the corner of Avenue A and Eighth Street, where the stationery store is, three flights up in the rear."

Fine rose from his desk and became at once much more cordial toward Bleistift.

"Well, all I could say is, Bleistift," he declared, "that for a merchant with a financial statement like this, such economy in living expenses is highly commendable—*highly* commendable."

Once more he shook Yetta by the hand, and a moment later the unhappy trio found themselves in a taxicab en route for Bleistift's office.

"Well, boys, I'm sorry," Yetta said. "We give a good show, but I guess it won't get over."

"You mean to say you don't live at the corner of Avenue A and Eighth Street?" Noblestone cried.

"Sure I live there, with Mrs. Gubin," she answered. "And if that old feller shows up next Wednesday night, Mrs. Gubin will have the surprise of her life."

"Why will she?" Noblestone asked. "Ain't it easy to change the name over the letter-box downstairs from Gubin to Bleistift for one night only?"

"And what's Gittelman going to do for Wednesday night—put somebody else in my part?" Yetta asked. "My two weeks' notice don't run out till a week from Saturday—and besides, he ain't got no understudy for me because I ain't missed a performance in seven years."

"I'll fix it with Gittelman," Noblestone said.

"You'll fix nothing with Gittelman," Bleistift interrupted. "You've fixed too much already. He addressed himself to Yetta. "Miss Saranov," he said, "you got to forgive me that I caused you all this trouble. You certainly acted wonderful, and whatever you charge me ain't too much. So good you were as a mother that there were times when even me you fooled, and the last thing I want to think of you as—is my mother."

It was a trifle dark in the taxicab and as they turned the corner of Fifth Avenue, Yetta permitted the motion of the cab to throw her against Bleistift so that her cool round cheek just brushed his.

"Listen!" she said. "I ain't going to throw you down now. Next Wednesday night Gittelman can put in an understudy if he wants to or the house can go dark. I'm giving a party that night, and Mrs. Gubin will cook the *tzimmas*, which I don't know what Mr. Noblestone

told that old feller about the way I cook *tzimmas*, but whatever he said Mrs. Gubin will make good on, and don't you forget it."

Noblestone leaned forward and touched Yetta's knee.

"Do me a favour, Miss Saranov, and have her cook some *apfel kuchen* too," he said, "because I remember now that I also mentioned that you could cook *apfel kuchen*, and Mrs. Gubin will have to make good on that, too."

On the following Wednesday night, at precisely seven, Marcus Fine alighted from a taxicab at the corner of Avenue A and Eighth Street, and entered the hallway of an apartment house which in New York real-estate circles is technically known as a cold water walk-up. He lighted a match and above one of the letter-boxes found the name Bleistift in typewritten characters, and after the door had clicked itself open, he was guided upstairs to the third floor by a combination of some of the most delectable odours which had ever assailed the nostrils of so well-fed an orphan as Fine.

"Come right along, Mr. Fine!" Yetta cried. "You are just in time."

As she leaned over the banisters, she made a perfectly composed picture of all that a fifty-year-old mother of the late 1870's or 1880's

ought to be. She wore a white lace cap over her slightly gray hair and a white lace bertha around her neck, which was perhaps a trifle too plump and smooth for her years, though not for Marcus Fine's taste in such matters.

"Excuse my hands," Yetta said as she greeted him on the landing. "Naturally they're a bit red and rough from the cooking."

"I would rather see such hands on a lady like you, Mrs. Bleistift," Fine declared gallantly, "than the finest piece of manicuring they ever turned out at a Fifth Avenue beauty parlour."

Yetta could not conceal a smile of gratification. She had taken a great deal of trouble with her hands. In fact, many a character comedian has spent less time on his entire make-up, including crêpe hair whiskers and a bald wig, than Yetta had devoted to her hands alone.

"Mr. Noblestone ain't arrived yet," she said. "We expect him any moment."

She led the way into the modest little living room, where Bleistift awaited them.

"Charles," she called, "here is Mr. Fine."

At her mention of his given name, used by her for the first time, Bleistift grew quite agitated, but not nearly so agitated as Marcus Fine when Yetta took his hat and managed in the process to give his hand a tiny squeeze. Perhaps she

felt instinctively, although she could not of course have known, that ever since her visit to the bank, Marcus Fine had experienced the utmost difficulty in keeping his mind fixed upon the important financial transactions under his charge, for in addition to being an orphan, Marcus Fine was also a widower. Moreover, in the few days succeeding his first meeting with Yetta, he had considered very carefully his lonely situation, and had come to a decision on the matter.

Now with the chairman of a loan and discount committee to come to a decision in any matter is followed immediately by acting upon that decision, and as Fine greeted Bleistift in what he conceived to be Bleistift's own home, he tried to impart the warmth of fatherhood to his ordinarily flabby handshake. Bleistift never noticed it. Neither did Yetta, who at once donned a large blue kitchen apron.

"*Ai!*" she exclaimed. "I must hurry back to the kitchen. Everything will be spoiled."

She was about to leave when Fine held up his hand after the fashion of a traffic policeman, combined with the solemnity of a conscientious objector to oaths making an affirmation in a lawsuit.

"One moment, Mrs. Bleistift," he began.

"I've got something important to say to you and your son—that is to say, in case you're sure the *tzimmas* won't burn."

Curiosity overcame Yetta's prudence and she admitted that she had some one helping in the kitchen.

"Then sit down for a moment," Fine continued. "I won't keep you long."

He waited till she was seated, and then he crossed to the sofa and sat down beside Bleistift.

"Young man," he began, placing his hand on Bleistift's shoulder, "you have a mother which has done everything for you, and you have done a whole lot for her." He patted Bleistift's shoulder as fatherly as he could. "And now," he announced, "it's time that somebody did something for you both."

Yetta felt intuitively that a situation fatal to the scene was about to transpire. She had experienced this feeling before in many other productions—premonitions of stage waits, wrong cues, and missing properties long before the mishap itself occurred.

"Maybe you'd better tell us about this later," she interrupted.

"I want to tell you about it now," Fine declared; "that is, if the *tzimmas* ain't going to

burn." And here he became fairly heroic. "As a matter of fact, I don't care if it does burn," he said. "What I've got to say is important to all of us. I've been thinking it over ever since you were in the bank, Mrs. Bleistift. I've looked your son up. His business is in good shape, but I can put it into better shape, because if you will agree to what I am going to ask you, this boy will not only have a mother to guide him, but a father also."

Yetta put her hand up to her cheek and groaned aloud. "*Ai tzuris!*" she cried. "I felt something like this was coming."

"Then that saves me a lot of trouble," Fine said, "for what I want to ask you, Mrs. Bleistift, is, will you marry me?"

Bleistift jumped to his feet. "*Her* marry *you!*" he exclaimed.

"Why not?" Fine retorted. "I ain't only sixty."

"*Only* sixty!" Yetta repeated with satirical emphasis.

"That's all," Fine assured her, "so if you will marry me——"

"But how can she marry you," Bleistift interrupted, finally and irrevocably stepping out of his part, "when she's going to marry me?"

Fine drew suddenly away from his prospective son. "Mrs. Bleistift!" he cried. "Is your son insane?"

"I don't know what he is," Yetta replied. "But whether he's sane or insane, what he's saying now is certainly news to me."

"I've been meaning to tell you for the last week, Yetta," Bleistift said. "For heaven's sake, don't throw me down for him!"

"What!" Yetta shrieked. "Me throw you down for this old fool!"

"Old fool?" Fine cried. "Me an old fool?"

"Sure you're an old fool," Yetta said. "If you wasn't, you wouldn't believe that a twenty-eight-year-old character woman in a make-up and a wig was the mother of a man five years older than herself!"

She pulled the gray wig and cap from her head and shook out her bobbed black hair, and then taking her handkerchief from her pocket, she rubbed the make-up from her face, exposing the ruddy smooth skin beneath.

"Now do I look like his mother?" she asked.

It was Marcus Fine's turn to grow white in the face—white and then fiery red.

"So!" he said hoarsely. "You tried to swindle me."

"We didn't try to do nothing of the kind,"

Bleistift retorted. "I've got a perfectly good business."

"And I've got some perfectly good *tzimmas*," Yetta added, "and if you're looking for the real thing in mothers, I'll show you that, too."

She went to the hallway and knocked on the kitchen door.

"Mrs. Gubin," she called. "Come here once."

A moment later a complete replica of what Yetta had been not ten minutes before entered the living room.

"*Nu!*" Mrs. Gubin cried. "What is it you want from my young life? The *tzimmas* is spoiling already."

Marcus Fine gazed upon Mrs. Gubin and, not only did his anger abate, but once more hope kindled in his breast.

"I've got to hand it to you, young woman," he said. "It's wonderful how you can play a mother."

"Say!" Yetta exclaimed. "I've been playing a mother since I was eighteen years old. I'm sick and tired of playing a mother."

"Then why not—er—I mean why don't you —er—well, you know what I mean." Bleistift stammered.

"Sure, I know what you mean," Yetta said, "but first we'll get married."

"And even before that," Mrs. Gubin added, "we'll eat some *tzimmas*. What do you say Mr. Fine?"

Marcus Fine shrugged his shoulders in complete surrender.

"I'm agreeable," he said.

WELL, WHY NOT?

"THE fact is that you've got old-fashioned ideas, Spirinova," said the impresario Spirinoff to his wife Madame Spirinova, the distinguished ex-prima donna of the Harkow opera. "You still consider that with a beautiful face and a fine figure, you understand, a singer should ought to have a voice. This is a big mistake and could cost us already money."

"Sdetzo!" Spirinova exclaimed, and her lip would have curled contemptuously except that several years before, when the beauty parlour business was as much in its infancy as motion pictures are to-day, she had been unsuccessfully treated by the electric needle for a black moustache. Hence her lip could no longer curl even though her moustache could. However, she possessed large, black, and expressive eyes, and with these she contrived to wither her husband with one indignant glare. "What *you* know about singing!" she said.

Spirinoff shrugged his shoulders. "And also you told *doch* the father that in six months I

could make her fit to give already an appearance at the Metropolitan," she continued.

"Well, what would I tell him?" Spirinoff protested. "Ain't he got a big garment business, and believe me, Spirinova, there's singers at the Metropolitan which sound like they was trained by much worser teachers than you."

"Sdetzo!" Spirinova exclaimed again. "Well, if I am such a rotten teacher, Spirinoff, maybe you would like to pay from your own pocket we should hire it one of them fakers from up-town he should give the girl lessons. Send her also candy and flowers, Spirinoff, and take her by high-priced restaurants to lunch also. What do I care?"

Spirinoff raised his right hand in the gesture of a toastmaster requesting silence for the speaker of the evening. He failed to obtain it, however, and it was not until Madame Spirinova had recited what might have been a new and unexpurgated edition of "The Affairs of Anatol" with just a suggestion of Casanova, that the hero of her absorbing narrative could obtain a hearing.

"Spirinova, listen to me," he said earnestly. "My interest in the daughter of this here Mr. Gollub the garment manufacturer is strictly business."

"Sdetzo!" Spirinova cried again.

"Yes, that is so," he assured her, "and I'll tell you right now, Spirinova, if you are going to say *is that so* every time I am trying to give you an advice which would put us on easy street for anyhow a year or two, y'understand, there's a lot of managers like Behrensohn and Gitlitz which would run away with this here proposition."

"Sdetzo!" Spirinova exclaimed finally. "Well, the trouble with you is you are a visionary, Spirinoff. You see the girl's father paying two thousand dollars for an appearance at Carnegie Hall or something. These are high ideals which you've got it, Spirinoff. They are too high by fifteen hundred dollars. He told me himself he is willing to go five hundred dollars that the girl should become a finished artist and not a cent more. Also he expects that with five hundred dollars a musical education, right away she should get an engagement to sing by anyhow three hundred and fifty dollars a week. He says he figures that for fifty dollars she could learn it stenography and make a minimum of thirty-five dollars a week, and for ten times that much education she should ought to draw down ten times so much wages. This here Gollub, he ain't an artist like you and me. He is a business man, a shopkeeper. All he thinks of

is money—money. What does he care about art?"

Spirinova drew the folds of what had once been a bright-coloured kimono around her.

"Three hundred and fifty a week," she repeated, "and for this I should charge only five hundred dollars. Money! That is the whole thing in America!"

She sat down heavily and rested her forehead on her clenched fist in a posture appropriate to the third act of "*Pique-Dame*" by Tschaikovsky, from which she was aroused by the entrance of Lou Spear, for his age—nineteen going on twenty—one of the best eccentric dancers in small-time vaudeville.

"Howdy, folks," he said, and then observing that his mother was plunged in heavy third-act gloom, he raised his eyebrows at his father and nodded sideways in the direction of his mother. "What's biting her?" he asked, and Madame Spirinova's head began to nod slowly.

"America!" she exclaimed. "That's a country! Respect for parents, there is none. Earnestness, art, study, what *is* it?" She brought her hands together in a gesture of despair, and then pressed them both to where an operatic convention has localized the human heart, at the point where the descending colon leaves

the transverse colon. "'What's biting me?' says my only son, and the father stands by yet!" she exclaimed bitterly.

"Well, what *is* biting you?" Lou Spear insisted.

"The boy's got right, Spirinova," Spirinoff said. "You're making a big fuss over nothing. Anybody coming in here right now would think the way you look that we've just got a dispossess or something."

"Well, if that's what's eating her," Lou Spear interrupted, "she can make her mind easy. I'm to sign up to-day with Al Zinberg for a hundred and fifty per."

"A hundred and fifty per!" Spirinova shrieked. "And this is my reward that from ten years old I got him lessons from Lebedeff what taught already Pavlowa, and from Rezwetzoff which he give Mordkin all *he* knew. A hundred and fifty per! *Vsyo otnyal oo minya!*"

"Whatever that may mean!" Lou added. "And whatever it does mean, a hundred and fifty per ain't to be sneezed at."

"Ach!" Spirinoff cried, flipping his right hand at his son. "Don't pay no attention to her, Louis. Everybody should have such a misfortune that their son makes a hundred and fifty dollars a week at nineteen."

"For a single it ain't bad," Lou admitted modestly, "and Al Zinberg says if I could find someone as snappy and good-looking as me to team up with, he could get four hundred like that."

That was expressed by snapping his fingers lightly, but Spirinova snapped her fingers with the greater force of a long experience in the rôle of Carmen.

"You should ought to get six hundred, seven hundred," cried the champion of art in its struggle with money. "My old confrère Bielawsky has got his boy Gregor by a musical show which opens next week, seven hundred and fifty per with a dancing partner which I give you my word, Spirinoff, if they would understand in this country what the art of dancing really is, y'understand, she couldn't be not even a figurante or coryphée."

"You mean Biel and Moran?" Lou asked, and Spirinova nodded. "Well, let me tell you something, mommer," he continued. "I don't know what them two things is she couldn't be, but she could be my dancing partner to-morrow and I could draw down a thousand per for the double with any show, because with her face and shape she could fall over her feet every ten seconds and still get notices above Will Rogers."

"That's what I am telling your mother," Spirinoff said. "Last night there comes here a Mr. Max Gollub and his daughter which he wants her she should be a singer. In fifteen minutes they would come back for mommer's decision is she going to train her!"

"Will I train a voice so big that it wouldn't fill already a telephone booth?" Spirinova demanded.

"Let it *not* fill a telephone booth," Spirinoff retorted. "With her face and shape she couldn't sing above a whisper, and the audience would think they'd been listening to Schumann-Heïnk or anyhow Galli-Curci."

"Before your own son you ain't ashamed to say this," Spirinova cried, her jealousy flaming up anew.

Lou whistled significantly. "So *that's* it, is it?" he said.

"Louis!" Spirinova cried. "You've got business to attend to by your contract, ain't it? I must get dressed if I am to see this here Gollub and his daughter."

"I don't sign no contracts till this afternoon," Lou said, taking off his overcoat, "so I guess I'll look 'em over, too."

Spirinova raised both her arms in the traditional grand-opera appeal to high heaven.

"The apples don't fall far from the tree," she said, and swept angrily from the room.

"This young girl must be a humdinger," Lou remarked after his mother had slammed her bedroom door behind her.

Spirinoff lighted a cigarette. "It ain't proper I should discuss such things with you, Louis," he said, "but she is peaches and cream, Louis, and if I could make a contract with her like Gitlitz and Behronson has made with one or two singers I could tell you about, I would get a commission on her salary for life, Louis. And it won't be a small salary, neither."

"But if she ain't got no voice——" Louis began.

Spirinoff waved the index finger of his right hand. "That's what your mommer says," he interrupted, "but she's got a voice, all right. It's a small voice and it needs training; that's all." He puffed seriously at his cigarette. "Also she's got stage presence and temperament, too, but your mommer can't see it," he concluded. "She's crazy with jealousy."

"She *is* crazy," the nineteen-year-old Louis declared, "to be jealous of you at your age."

Spirinoff nodded. "I'm an old man, Louis," he said bitterly. "I'm pretty near forty-three."

As a matter of fact, Louis thought his father

was only forty-one, and it came to him as quite a shock that he must cherish the old folks while he still had them with him. He therefore proffered Spirinoff the cigar which Al Zinberg had handed out to bind the contract he had verbally made with Louis, and supplemented this gift by patting his old or at least rapidly aging father on the shoulder.

"No one would guess it on you at that," he said encouragingly.

The elder Spirinoff murmured his thanks. "You're a big comfort to your mommer and me in our old age, Louis," he said, "in particular your mommer, which she will be forty-two next Monday, Louis, and if this here Miss Gollub has got only half her pep and ambition, y'understand, she would be already a sensation."

Here Spirinoff heaved a profound sigh.

"If only your mommer was a little more *simpatica*, Louis!" he said. "What couldn't she have been in Riga if she hadn't thrown the piano *partitur* of '*Forza del Destino*' at the *regisseur?* It was the same way in Nijni. 'Spirinova,' I says, 'you are going too far,' I says. 'You cannot call a *maestro d'orchestra* a dirty dog,' I says, 'not in the middle of a performance, anyhow,' and the results was they didn't renew her contract."

What further details of Spirinova's career he could have disclosed were interrupted by a ring at the doorbell.

"Here they are now, Louis," he said, rising wearily, but when a moment later he opened the door leading into the hallway of the sixth floor in the Second Avenue apartment building in which the Spirinoff family housed its artistic pursuits, including its cuisine and laundry work, there stood revealed not the fascinating Miss Gollub and her father, but a figure much less decorative than either. It was that of Sergei Bielawsky, formerly basso profundo of the Harkow Opera, later proprietor of the defunct Bielawsky Conservatory of Music on East Fourth Street and finally the occupant of the table nearest the stove in the Café de la Paix, corner of Twelfth Street and Second Avenue.

"*Stravsvouitie! Strasvouitie!*" he cried in a voice whose resonance had at one time cracked the filaments in the electric light bulbs of the Harkow Opera. It had been in no wise impaired by American cigarettes and it had even been intensified by a long indulgence in post-war whisky, fumes of which blended with the odour of fried onions—always the harbinger of meal-time in a Second Avenue apartment house.

"Bielawsky," Spirinoff said, "we are busy and you must excuse us this morning."

It was a warm day in April. Nevertheless, Bielawsky was wrapped in a fur-lined overcoat, buttoned to the neck, and his gray and matted hair brushed the top of his astrakhan collar, which in twenty years had in fact known no other brush and looked it.

"One moment!" he said. "Only one moment I'll detain you."

He edged past Spirinoff and entered the large living room where Louis stood to greet the feminine object of his mother's jealousy. That he was disappointed would go without saying, but Louis said it notwithstanding.

"What's *he* butting in for?" he exclaimed.

"Louis," Bielawsky said, "you're in luck that I find you here."

"In rotten luck," Louis added. "Which if you want to make a touch, Mr. Bielawsky, why don't you go to your boy George?"

Bielawsky drew himself up so indignantly that the button flew off the neck of his fur overcoat and revealed the absence of a necktie underneath.

"Spirinoff," he said, "if your son has no respect for you, let him have respect at least for your friends."

Spirinoff shrugged. "If you've got something to say to the boy, go ahead."

"I've got nothing to say to him," Bielawsky announced with dignity. "I would never lower myself I should speak to him at all, but Gregor says if he wants a job to support him and Miss Moran by their new show 'Be Careful, Girly,' he would give him seventy-five a week and eighty-five on the road."

Louis broke into a mirthless and to Bielawsky a most offensive laugh.

"The word *support* you can't stand, I suppose," he said to Louis, "but believe me, Spirinoff, your boy could support worser dancers than Gregor, and as for Miss Moran——" He broke off suddenly and kissed the tips of his fingers with a loud smack.

"Moran's all right," Louis said. "Moran don't have to move a toe. She's there without it, but why a nice girl like that should team up with your George, that's beyond me."

"Why not?" Bielawsky demanded.

"Because he's no good, see?" Louis cried. "And so are you."

"Louis! Louis!" Spirinoff protested.

Louis jerked his thumb toward the door. "Go on!" he said. "Get out of here!" He

turned his back on Bielawsky and sat down just as Spirinova entered.

"Louis!" she exclaimed. "How dare you talk this way?" She turned to Bielawsky and held out her right hand in a well-schooled gesture of compassion. "My poor friend!" she almost sang. "From my heart, I apologize." She was expanding her lungs so as not to interrupt a long speech with pauses for air when the doorbell rang and this time Louis was not disappointed.

"Come right in, Mr. Gollub *and* Miss Gollub," Spirinoff cried as he opened the door.

He led the way into the living room, closely followed by Mr. Gollub, a short, slight person with a close-clipped moustache, who possessed all the outward appearance of forcefulness which characterizes an A to K bookkeeper in a small commercial bank, combined with bow legs. What really impressed people who were acquainted with Mr. Gollub and his family, however, was the complete omission from Mr. Gollub's personality of any clue by which one could deduce the existence of an only daughter with the perfection of form and feature of Miss Goldie Gollub.

At forty-one years of age, Madame Spirinova's eyes were of a size and brilliancy to be envied by

a Spanish dancer and *copleta* singer, whose eyes are so much more important to her career than her legs or her voice. Compared to Miss Gollub's eyes, however, Spirinova's were as two-penny tallow dips to the large chandelier in the Paris Opera. And these eyes of Miss Gollub were set in a face so beautiful that even Bielawsky felt the influence of it. To conceal the absence of collar and necktie, he held his fur coat tight round his neck with his trembling right hand while his left felt unconsciously for the monocle that at one time dangled at his waist; but monocle and waist had both disappeared years ago.

"She is like your wife twenty years ago," he murmured in Russian to Spirinoff, but the impresario was too busy to pay any attention to him.

"You have an audience to-day, Miss Gollub," he said, nodding toward Louis—"my son Louis."

Now when Louis had told his parents that he could command a higher salary by teaming up with a dancing partner as snappy and good-looking as himself, he might have been immodest, but he was not untruthful. In fact, had Miss Gollub been consulted about it, after Louis had acknowledged the introduction with his best audience bow, she would have declared that

Louis had understated the matter. At any rate, she blushed vividly, and when the tide of admiring colour had retreated, her cheeks so vividly contrasted with the pure whiteness of her neck and forehead that Madame Spirinova was compelled to nudge her husband from a rapt contemplation of Miss Gollub into professional activity.

"Spirinoff," she said, "what are you standing? Get from the music cabinet '*Deh Vieni, Non Tardar.*'"

A frightened look came into Miss Gollub's brown eyes. "I can't sing that in front of all these people," she protested.

"You sang it very nice yesterday," Spirinoff assured her.

"And as you sang yesterday, so you will sing again to-day," Spirinova said with an equivocal smile. "And this gentleman here will listen to you."

Here Mr. Gollub for the first time asserted himself. "Where does he come in?" he inquired. "I thought this morning we would fix up the terms and so forth, Mr. and Mrs. Spirinoff and myself together without family or friends—ain't it?"

Spirinova swept back her wavy hair with a

heavily but not expensively jewelled hand. "It don't go so quick, Mr. Gollub," she said. "I want this gentleman he should also express an opinion on your daughter's voice. He's an expert."

Bielawsky, still clutching his coat, bowed impressively.

"One expert at a time, Mrs. Spirinoff," Gollub said. "I am hiring you as an expert, ain't I, Mrs. Spirinoff?"

Bielawsky cleared his throat, but without materially decreasing the rasping quality of his voice. "Madame Spirinova and I have been for years fellow artists," he explained. "As her friend, I give my services for nothing. You are welcome to my opinion of your daughter's voice."

Gollub nodded. "I'm satisfied," he said; "only one thing I must got to tell you. This thing has got to be settled right here and now. I've wasted enough time away from the store, Mrs. Spirinoff."

Spirinova winced at this repeated Americanization of her surname, but she smiled amiably at Mr. Gollub nevertheless.

"It will be settled quickly now," she declared, and seating herself at the ancient concert grand

piano which filled a good quarter of the room, she played in perfunctory fashion the opening measures of the Mozart aria.

Miss Gollub stood with her arm outstretched on the side of the piano, and with her beautiful head bent as though collecting herself for a splendid piece of artistry. At the end of the brief piano introduction, she lifted her face, flushed and animated, and as her lips parted, she exposed a perfect set of teeth.

If, Bielawsky reflected, she produced a tone one tenth as grateful to the ear as the picture she presented was to the eye, nothing could prevent the eclipse of Jeritza. With an encouraging nod, however, Spirinova signalled Miss Gollub to begin singing, and at the first note Jeritza was safe. Moreover, in the present state of Miss Gollub's vocal development, not only was Jeritza safe, but the lowliest chorus lady of the Metropolitan ensemble had nothing to fear from Miss Gollub's competition either.

Indeed, as the aria proceeded, such was the effect of Miss Gollub's crude singing on Bielawsky that he released his grasp on the neck of his overcoat and shamelessly revealed his soiled and collarless shirt.

"Well, you can't have everything," he said at the conclusion of the song, "so I will say

good-morning to you, Mr. Gollub." He rose to his feet and started from the room.

"Wait a minute," Louis cried. "You ain't said what you think of this lady's voice."

"What voice?" he said. "Was there a voice around here? If there was, I didn't hear it."

Miss Gollub's eyes filled with tears and she clasped her hands miserably.

"Is that so!" Louis exclaimed. "Well, I think she sings swell."

Bielawsky laughed a hoarse, insulting guffaw. "You think!" he jeered. "Since when was your son a critic of singing, Spirinova?"

"Ask me, not her," Louis said. "I've been listening to more kinds of singing in the past fifteen years than this here Gatti-Casazza. Singing and scrapping goes on in this house in day and night shifts, Bielawsky, and the only idea of singing everybody's got around here is that it should sound like hollering in an empty barrel. That's what all you foreigners think."

"Foreigners!" Spirinoff and Spirinova exclaimed with more accord than was usual in their marital conversation.

"Foreigners!" Louis repeated. "That's what I said. When it comes to singing, calling each other by your right names, wearing collars and neckties and living like human beings, you folks

ain't begun to emigrate yet. You're still in the old country."

Bielawsky turned to Louis's mother. "Ain't you got no control over your own son, Spirinova?" he asked.

"Say, listen," Louis broke in. "This lady's name is Mrs. Spirinoff, and you've got to call her by it when I'm around."

Mr. Gollub began to perspire with timidity and signalized his impending departure by slapping his derby hat on his head with a loud tambourine-like noise.

"*Nu*, Goldie," he said to his daughter, "I guess we'll be going."

"What for?" Louis demanded. "You ain't even begun to talk terms yet."

"Terms!" Gollub murmured. "What terms? Do you suppose for one minute I would pay even two cents to someone for teaching my daughter singing when this here expert says she ain't got no voice?"

Louis snatched Mr. Gollub's hat from his head and threw it on the piano. "Do you expect your daughter to have a foreign voice or an American voice?" he asked.

Mr. Gollub shrugged. "A voice is a voice," he said, "whether it's domestic or imported."

"That's where you make a big mistake,"

Louis retorted, seating himself at the piano. "Now, come, Miss Gollub, this here Mozart died a couple of hundred years ago. Get onto a live one, like this." He began to play the song hit of a recent Broadway success.

"Louis!" Spirinova cried. "Please! Not in this house!"

"Why not?" Louis asked. "Miss Gollub don't object. I'll bet she sings it, too."

Miss Gollub nodded.

"Then go ahead, and show 'em what you can do," Louis said. "Shoot!"

The next moment Miss Gollub had worked a remarkable transformation in the appearance and manner of everybody in that room. Once more Bielawsky clutched the collar of his coat and fumbled for the monocle that was no longer there.

Spirinoff, who up to then had been quite crushed, straightened himself in his chair and smiled happily. Even Spirinova forgot to be the tragedy queen and looked interested, for as an artist she could appreciate any manifestation of the vocal art, and within its narrow limits Miss Gollub's interpretation of a trite Broadway song hit was a most artistic performance.

She sang two of the three stanzas with the refrain, her eyes sparkling and her body swaying

to the seductive rhythm of the accompaniment, but before playing the introduction to the remaining stanza, Louis paused.

"There's a dance goes at the end of this last verse," he said. "Do you think you could make it in that space there?" He indicated the rug on which Miss Gollub stood.

"You didn't say you could dance, did you, Miss Gollub?" Spirinoff asked.

"She don't have to say it," Louis broke in. "I know she can dance. Ain't that right, Miss Gollub?"

Again Goldie nodded, and flashed so brilliant a smile at Louis that he played the first measures of the accompaniment in the wrong key and had to begin all over again.

"The dance'll be a repeat of the whole number," he announced, and two minutes later, when Miss Gollub sank flushed and breathless onto the sofa, he turned triumphantly to Bielawsky.

"Why don't you offer *her* seventy-five a week to support Biel and Moran?" he said.

"I've got nothing to say against this lady's dancing," Bielawsky replied. "She dances A-number-one."

"And she's got a light soprano of a good range also," Spirinoff declared.

"For operetta," Spirinova added firmly, "not for grand opera."

"Absolutely not," Bielawsky agreed. "And what's more, Spirinoff, this is such a voice which she's got it, that if you train a voice like this, y'understand, you are liable to train away what little voice she has got."

Once more Mr. Gollub violently assumed his derby hat and produced a ringing sound which seemed to punctuate the negotiations with a large black period.

"Then that settles it," he said. "Come on, Goldie."

But Goldie remained seated on the sofa, where, covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears. Immediately Louis rose from the piano-stool and sat down beside her.

"Miss Gollub," he pleaded, "for heaven's sakes, don't do that." He turned to his father. "Pop!" he cried. "Can't you do nothing?"

"Do!" Spirinoff murmured, shrugging his shoulders. "What can I do? The girl would make a very snappy Musetta. She could sing already such rôles like Amina, even if she did have to take any note above A with her eye-brows. It's been done before in grand opera, and it will be done again. All she needs is

training, and if she couldn't make her twenty, thirty thousand a year, then I'm crazy."

"You *are* crazy," Spirinova declared, just as Gollub was about to remove his hat. "Let the girl dance. That's her *métier*."

Bielawsky nodded emphatically, and had Miss Gollub not at that precise moment indulged in another and more violent attack of weeping it is impossible to say what would have been the consequences in view of the unprotected condition of Bielawsky's collarless throat. Both Lou and his father would probably have strangled him, but instead they applied themselves to the more agreeable task of comforting Miss Gollub, each patting a shoulder while Spirinova trembled with suppressed rage and jealousy.

"S'enough, Spirinoff," she said hoarsely. "Let's make an end here."

She turned to Gollub and motioned him to be seated with a gesture which usually accompanied the line "*Reste la*, Don José." Gollub promptly removed his hat and sat down.

"You have heard what my husband said," she began.

"And you said it was crazy," Bielawsky broke in.

"With some teachers, yes. It *is* crazy," Spirinova admitted, "but with the operatic

training which I could give her, it is not impossible that she should make her twenty thousand a year."

"And I should pay good money for near-impossibilities," Gollub said. "Is this the idea?"

Here Miss Gollub herself created a diversion by jumping excitedly to her feet. It was her first contribution to the argument and it was a notable one.

"What am I?" she demanded. "A dummy? You're treating me like I couldn't hear or something. Do you suppose for one moment that I'd take lessons from this lady now? Not if she could make a Melba out of me at fifty cents an hour. Come on, pop."

Bielawsky laid a detaining and extremely dirty hand on her arm. "If," he began, "there is anything I have said——"

"*You've* said!" she cried. "Do you think I care what you say or anybody else around here —except maybe this boy!" She grasped Lou's shoulder and pressed it affectionately. "And the chances are, he's mistaken, too," she said. "I probably am pretty bad, at that."

She started for the door with Mr. Gollub following, but Lou once more grabbed the musical derby hat and this time he held it behind him.

"Now you ain't going to leave here like this," he announced. "You're going to have your lessons, if not from her, from somebody else."

"Sdetzo!" Spirinova and Mr. Gollub exclaimed in perfect unison.

"And who is going to pay for these lessons?" Mr. Gollub continued.

Louis cleared his throat and glanced at his father. "I will," he said huskily.

"You will!" Spirinoff said. "From what?"

"I've got in savings bank right now twelve hundred and forty-two dollars," Lou said. "I didn't turn over all my money to you folks, not by a jugful."

Spirinova's head again became palsied with indignation. "This is the reward I get!" she exclaimed. "I suppose also your contract with this here Al Zinberg calls for two hundred and fifty, not one hundred and fifty."

"That's my business," Louis said.

"Is it?" Spirinova retorted. "Well, let me tell you it's a law that a mother and father is entitled to the earnings of their children."

Louis waved both his hands at his mother. "That idea belongs with calling you Spirinova and wearing a fur coat and no necktie," he said. "That's a law which didn't get by Ellis Island, mommer, so get this straight. My

earnings is my own and I invest them as I please, and if I want to stake this lady to a thousand dollars so as she can have her voice trained, the law is by the Second Avenue Municipal Court and everywhere this side of the Battery that I've got a right to do it."

Gollub snatched his hat from Louis's grasp. "And do you suppose I'd let you pay for my daughter's lessons?" he asked.

"Why not?" Louis said.

"Why not!" Gollub exclaimed. "What *are* you? Her husband or something?"

Louis's face grew instantly scarlet, but Goldie was not at all embarrassed. Indeed, she grasped Louis's moist and trembling hand and squeezed it hard.

"It's all right," she said. "I'll get the lessons somehow."

For an instant longer she retained Louis's hand, and then with a last dazzling smile, she followed her father from the apartment.

Spirinoff, who was lounging in a chair, turned wearily to the late basso profundo of the Harkow Opera.

"Bielawsky," he said, almost gently, "my boy is right. The time is past for Russian compliments and Russian foolishness. Therefore I speak to you in plain Second Avenue English.

Do me the favour! Get the hell out of here and don't come back."

Spirinova rose to at least four inches above her normal height and drew a long breath, but her husband forestalled her.

"*Koosh!*" he bellowed. "I heard enough from you, Mrs. Spirinoff. For three dollars a family circle seat, and I can have grand opera four nights a week by the Metropolitan Opera House. But this is my home and the home of my boy here. Go out in the kitchen and get for us some lunch." He pointed to the door. "*Nu*, Bielawsky," he said, "will you get out or shall I kick you out?"

Bielawsky looked at Spirinova, but in the two large tears which began to furrow their way down the make-up on her cheeks he found little encouragement to stay, and the next moment the hall door closed behind him.

"T'phooee!" Spirinoff exclaimed, throwing up the windows. "The place smells like a distillery already." He sat down by the side of his son and placed his arm around the boy's shoulder. "Cheer up, Louis," he said. "After all, it ain't you which has lost the chance of a lifetime."

He lighted a cigarette and puffed reflectively while Spirinova, twisting her handkerchief between her hands, watched them.

"So you've got in savings bank twelve hundred dollars, Louis," he continued.

Louis nodded gloomily. "Twelve hundred and forty-two dollars without the last interest," he said.

Spirinoff again patted his shoulder. "I wonder would you lend it me for a year," he asked the boy.

Madame Spirinova fairly leaped to her feet. "Louis!" she screamed. "Don't do no such thing. He'll gamble with it."

"You're right," Spirinoff assured her. "That's just what I'm going to do. And I'm going to win. I'm going to see that *Italiener* feller, the one who trained the mezzo Gianarelli which Behrenson and Gitlitz now draw regularly a commission of anyhow three hundred a week from her concert engagements alone. And I'm going to play in that whole twelve hundred and fifty dollars on this Miss Gollub. She's a bet, Louis, a big bet."

"And you would go to this here *Italiener* and not give me the chance," Spirinova wailed.

Spirinoff smiled sadly. "You had your chance and you threw it away," he declared. "You've got this Miss Gollub all wrong. You think she's just a pretty girl and that Louis and me see nothing else in her, but you're mistaken. We

see in her all sorts of things, and one of them is that she's got just so much high spirits like you've got it." He grabbed her hand and patted it gently. "Why, if you was to give that girl lessons, mommer," he said, using that endearing term for the first time in years, "we would got to separate you with policemen yet, and besides she wouldn't learn by you, anyway. She just now said so. So come on, Louis, and we will get our lunch on the way up-town."

This time Madame Spirinova clutched at her real heart, not her operatic one. "Up-town!" she exclaimed. "Then you *are* going to see this *Italiener?*" Spirinoff nodded. "All right," she said. "I'll go with you."

Here Louis intervened. "You won't do nothing of the kind," he declared. You've got to know it sooner or later, mommer, but this is a business matter which concerns me, and hereafter you've got to keep strictly out of my affairs."

Harsh as this ultimatum appeared to be, however, it was not nearly as shocking as the behaviour of George Biel alias Gregor Bielawsky toward his father Sergei when the latter arrived at the table nearest the stove in the Café de la Paix at the corner of Second Avenue and Twelfth Street.

"For the love of Mike, where've you been keeping yourself?" George demanded. "I've been waiting for you for half an hour."

"Ach!" Bielawsky exclaimed, flipping the fingers of his right hand. "The girl ain't got no voice at all."

"What girl ain't got no voice?" George demanded. "Are you a *bissel meshuggeh* or something? I sent you over to find out if Louis would accept seventy-five a week to join the act, and you begin to talk about somebody not having a voice."

"Gregor!" Bielawsky cried. "What comes over you this morning? You got pepper up your nose something terrible."

"Well, why don't you tell me what Louis said?" George retorted. "If I don't get Louis, I can't open."

"Why not?" Bielawsky asked.

"Because I've got to break in a new girl," George said gloomily as he drummed the table top with his fingers. "Moran quit on me yesterday and I've got to have Louis to steady the act with a new girl in it, or I can't open."

"Then why didn't you tell me this before I went over there?" Bielawsky said. "Because Louis ain't available no longer. He's got a contract with Zinberg, and I don't even know

the girl's address, even if I could remember her father's name."

"Listen!" George inquired. "Have you been drinking again?"

"Did I ever stop?" Bielawsky retorted. "And what has drinking got to do with it? The girl ain't got no voice, I admit, but as a dancer, Gregor, she's there, Gregor, and as a looker——" Bielawsky kissed the tips of his fingers with such a moisture of admiration that compared with the rest of his hand, they seemed quite clean. "Believe me, Gregor," he concluded, "you will never miss Moran when you see this girl once."

"When I see this girl once!" George exclaimed, "and you don't know her address even if you could remember her name."

"But Spirinova could tell us, Gregor," Bielawsky said, grabbing his son's arm. "Let's go right over and ask her."

No sooner had they reached the sidewalk than Spirinova herself approached from the street corner. "Good-morning, Mrs. Spirinoff," George Biel cried jovially, but Spirinova assumed an expression of such frigid haughtiness that Bielawsky shivered in his fur coat. Moreover, she answered in Russian, a tongue imperfectly understood by George Biel:

"My name," she said, "is Madame Spirinova. I know nobody called Mrs. Spirinoff."

"Certainly it's a nice day if that's what you said," George assured her. "But if you'll come inside for a moment, I want to talk business to you."

The effect on Spirinova was electrical. "Business!" she shrieked. "Always business! That is the trouble here! All is business, business, business, and where is it the art, the beauty?"

Bielawsky tried to calm her. "Not in the street, Spirinova," he pleaded.

Gently he thrust her through the doorway of the café and a moment later they sat at what ought to have been Bielawsky's voting address, the table nearest the stove.

"Bring this lady a cup coffee and some *mohn kuchen*," he said to the waiter, and then he took Spirinova's jewelled fingers and affectionately patted the vitreous ornaments which covered them. "You have much to distress you this morning, Spirinova," he said in Russian, but Spirinova chose for her answer the vernacular of the neighbourhood.

"You bet my life I have," she said. "What the devil you are coming round to my house for at eleven o'clock in the morning, I don't know! You are at the bottom of everything. *You will*

train the voice away, he says. *You dassen't touch such a voice*, he says, and this here *Italiener* steps in and *he* trains the girl's voice, not me."

"But who gives a button about the girl's voice?" George Biel interrupted. "Forget voices for a minute and listen to me. I've got to get ahold of that girl before two o'clock this afternoon, and I want her name and address."

Madame Spirinova grew at once strangely calm, not to say suspicious. "What for?" she asked.

"What's the difference, what for?" Bielawsky began, but his son brushed him aside.

"Why beat bushes around?" he broke in. "Miss Moran has walked out on me and I want to get that girl for a dancing partner, Mrs. Spirinoff. Therefore, Mrs. Spirinoff, for any services which you give me toward getting ahold of her this afternoon, I will pay you a generous commission."

"Oh, you will, will you!" Spirinova said. "And suppose I was to tell you that I wanted to get for my own son, as a dancing partner, this here Miss Gollub."

Bielawsky slapped the table with his open palm. "Gollub!" he cried. "That's the name, and the father is in the garment business. I remember it all now."

With what musicians call splendid attack, Bielawsky and his son rose from the table, leaving Spirinova to a solitary consumption of her coffee and cake and a no less solitary payment of the ensuing bill. But where Bielawsky and son were at a disadvantage was in the matter of being obliged first to consult the classified telephone directory, only to find that Mr. Gollub was not listed for the reason that he manufactured ladies' suits under the firm name of the Eagle Mfg. and Importation Company.

And since there was nothing in Mr. Gollub's personality which would suggest that imperial bird, the eagle, as even a registered trade-mark, Bielawsky and his son were also obliged to consult members of the garment industry before they ascertained that Mr. Gollub's first name was Aaron and that he resided at Riverside Drive and 108th Street. It was therefore more than three hours later before they alighted from a bus at that windy corner, and by bribing the elevator boy of the Gollub apartment house, presented themselves at the Gollub doorway unannounced.

Even before they rang the Gollub bell, they could detect the sound of voices in the Gollub apartment, and one of these voices possessed the timbre of an operatic mezzo soprano. Con-

sequently, when the Gollub maid opened the door, they brushed unceremoniously past her, for they conceived that this was no time for delaying formalities. They were quite right.

"Suppose you did promise the *Italiener*, popper," said this mezzo soprano voice as they entered. "Think, popper, what it means to your son and this sweet girl."

"It means fifteen hundred a week—that's what it means," said a brassy and quite uncultivated baritone which issued from a face that might be described as of steel construction throughout, both fire- and burglar-proof, and which with a sinking of his indurated heart, George Biel immediately recognized as that of Al Zinberg, a vaudeville agent who specialized on high-priced dancers.

"Furthermore," Zinberg continued, "I got the low-down from reliable parties that on account of this here split between Biel and Moran, the act is out of 'Be Careful, Girly,' and if you say the word, Miss Gollub, you and Lou are in, and a big hit before you rehearse even."

Goldie sat on a sofa next to her proposed dancing partner and unconsciously their fingers were entwined in as ardent a clasp as when last they met three hours before.

"But, mommer *leben*," Spirinoff protested,

and such was the change his feelings had undergone since noon that he, too, clasped the gilded fingers of Spirinova, "suppose Mr. Gollub should object to his daughter travelling round the country with our boy."

Mr. Gollub, who had been hastily summoned from his place of business, stood looking at the steamers of the United States Shipping Board which were plainly visible from Mr. Gollub's front windows. To Mr. Gollub they seemed to be his daughter's ships and they were all coming home freighted with the most precious jewels.

"How old did you say your son was?" he asked Spirinova.

"He's nineteen," she said, "but then his popper and me was married when we was eighteen even."

Mr. Gollub turned and surveyed the young people sitting on the sofa at the precise moment when Bielawsky and son tiptoed down the hall and closed the door behind them.

"Well!" Gollub said as though thinking aloud. "Why not?"

YES, MR. ROSENTHAL!

I SEEN this coming ever since you and mommer arrived in Los Angeles, pop," said Ralph Rosenthal, President of the Four Arts Film Corporation, "and you must realize, pop, that I ain't a child no longer."

"We do realize it, and so do they," Sigmund Rosenthal replied.

"Who's 'they'?" Ralph demanded.

"The little blonde which mommer and me seen you with at this here Beaulieu Restaurant on Friday night," Sigmund said, "and the big blonde you was with on Saturday night. And how many more blondes realize it, Rafie, I don't know, but when a feller gets to be president of a big fillum corporation at the age of twenty-eight, y'understand, if only two blondes realize that he ain't a child no longer, then he's got to be very careful what he says to them in the presence of witnesses, understand me, otherwise the least he could hope for it that on account of the way the court calendars is crowded

in California, he might get a settlement before either case comes to trial, ain't it?"

"Listen, pop!" Ralph interrupted. "Why don't you and mommer take a run down to San Diego for a few days? You ain't seen hardly nothing of California, and you'll be going back to New York soon."

"Will we?" Sigmund retorted.

"Well, who's going to look after your business while you're out here?" Ralph asked.

"I got a partner, Rafie—your brother Joe," Sigmund explained, "and that boy is so steady, y'understand, that I could leave him in charge of the business for years in full confidence that if he takes a blonde to a restaurant, understand me, the blonde has got no other expectations than getting the usual discount on the bill of goods she would order the next day."

Sigmund licked an uncurled wrapper of one of the most freely burning four-for-a-quarter cigars that ever poisoned the orange-perfumed atmosphere of California and proceeded to light up before continuing.

"Which your brother Joe and me feels the same way about blondes, Rafie," he said, puffing out a great cloud of yellow vapour. "As garment buyers, we regard blondes very highly, y'understand, but him and me both married

brunettes, and although it'll be thirty-five years since I become prejudiced in favour of it, y'understand, brown is still a popular shade with me —in the matter of wives' complexions, I mean."

Ralph rose from his desk and ostentatiously opened two windows, and as the weather was particularly warm for California in February, he also switched on the electric fan before reseating himself.

"Now look-a-here, pop," he began. "Them two blondes you seen me with last Friday and Saturday night was Miss Adelaide Dearly and Miss Joan Grenville."

He accented the word *Miss* in each instance, and his pale face bore that stern expression which he ordinarily assumed when dealing with the more inconsequential personages of the motion-picture world, such as continuity writers receiving less than five thousand dollars for a continuity or actors male and female not under contract at a minimum of three thousand dollars a week.

"I am considering them two young ladies for the part of the daughter in 'Should Married Men Behave?'—our next picture," he continued, and here his voice rose to a pitch entirely unfilial. It was the voice of a successful motion-picture producer addressing a motion-picture director

who has just put over three failures one after the other. "And once and for all, even if it would be my own father, I ain't allowing nobody to interfere in my business."

Sigmund made a flapping, deprecating gesture with his right hand.

"Not for the world!" he said solemnly. "Your business is your business, Rafie, and I wouldn't say a word about it even though I would be for six days and more watching you do what you call business. So far as I am concerned, Rafie, it's none of my affair that you sit here hour after hour listening to people saying 'Yes, Mr. Rosenthal.' I wouldn't even make no remarks on the fact that the only time somebody give you an argument was when your casting director said 'Well, yes, Mr. Rosenthal,' instead of simply 'Yes', y'understand, and even then, Rafie, you terrorized the feller into taking back the 'Well.' You are the boss here, Rafie, and I appreciate it that you ain't got no interest in blondes, even though your stenographer is a blonde, the girl what sits outside and answers the phone is a blonde, and you've got enough blondes working in your studio here in clerical positions to make the place look like a Swedish picnic."

He headed off a second outburst from Ralph

by the simple expedient of temporarily suffocating him with another hundred cubic feet of smoke.

"But," Sigmund continued, "your mommer and me think a great deal of you outside of business, Rafie. We named you Raphel, after your Uncle Raphel, *olav hasholom*, who was for twenty-five years president of the Fannie Hirshfield Home for Indignant Females, y'understand, and me and your mommer got you the jump on that home to the extent of anyhow ten thousand dollars in his will. Now I ain't going to remind you how it give you a start in this here business, Rafie. I ain't even going to mention how before even we dedicated your Uncle Raphel's headstone, you went to work and wished a blond name like Ralph onto your family. All I am saying is that it's got to stop there. Well, I guess I'll be going on account I've got a date with your mommer for lunch at one."

Ralph was almost cordial now that Sigmund had started.

"Take my car, pop," he said, indicating a large imported limousine, finished in robin's-egg blue with heavily silver-plated handles, lamps, and radiator front; but Sigmund raised his right hand and shrugged both shoulders.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "Somebody's got to

ride in street-cars, ain't it? Besides, I told your mommer to watch for me getting off a street-car in front of the hotel at one o'clock, and if I was to arrive in that car there, she mightn't notice me."

He nodded his head sideways toward the windows through which Ralph's car could be seen glistening like the flat silver department of a Fifth Avenue jeweller.

"And if you feel that you'd like to eat dinner with us to-night, Rafie," he concluded, "mommer and me have found a little Hungarian place just around the corner from the hotel where they got the most wonderful *Sauerbraten mit Kartoffel Kloese* for thirty-five cents. It'll remind you of the old days—before you was in the moving-picture business two and a half years ago."

Sigmund noted with satisfaction the shade of annoyance which passed over his son's face and then departed for the studio entrance, trailing dense clouds of smoke behind him. He walked rapidly, for at sixty-five years of age Sigmund's physical condition was perfect, a fact which he attributed to his moderation in smoking, and other such rules of conduct as never drinking stimulants, not before six o'clock anyway, eating not more than three lamb chops for breakfast,

and taking practically no luncheon at all aside from soup, meat, two vegetables, and a piece of apple strudel. He also went to bed if possible before midnight but if not by one o'clock or at the latest half past, and never slept with his bedroom windows entirely closed except in cold weather. He considered sixty degrees Fahrenheit to be cold weather.

Thus when Sigmund entered the street-car, although it was a pleasant February day in southern California—a day which would have been delightful for June in New York—he threw away his cigar and took refuge from exposure to drafts in the closed section. There he unfolded a copy of a Los Angeles morning paper and proceeded to look for the Business Troubles column, which is a feature of New York morning papers exclusively. From this vain search he was aroused by choking sounds of what anybody less uniformly affectionate toward his wife than Sigmund would have recognized to be suppressed weeping.

He looked up from his paper to find that the only other occupant of the closed section was sitting with her face buried in her handkerchief. Her shoulders shook convulsively and even Sigmund, who had not paid much attention to female shoulders in the past thirty-five years, could not

help noting that they were beautifully moulded shoulders, covered by a most becoming dark silk costume which he unconsciously appraised as being manufactured to retail at about twenty dollars apiece.

"Here! Here!" Sigmund cried. "You can't do that around here. People'll think you're crazy."

The young lady looked up from her handkerchief. "Leave me alone," she said, and Sigmund shrugged an apology.

"All right," he said. "If you want to make an exhibition from yourself, that's your business, but I'm old enough to be your father and even with a little luck your grandfather, so excuse me if you think I'm fresh."

She shook her head and continued to sob. "It isn't that," she managed to say. "I'm so discouraged."

"Well, be discouraged at home, but in a streetcar it don't look right," Sigmund said, turning once more to his newspaper. But the sobbing continued nevertheless. For about half a dozen blocks Sigmund endured it in silence and then he could stand it no longer.

"Listen!" he began. "I'm for thirty-five years a married man, and my wife is waiting lunch for me right now, so if I ask you what's

the trouble and you don't want to tell me, don't do it."

The hint of a smile trembled on the young lady's rather full red lips—and they were naturally red, because all the lip-stick colour had by this time been transferred to her handkerchief. "He told me to come back to-day and he would surely put me to work," she said, "but this morning he said they were only using blondes in the picture and there wouldn't be anything else for a week."

"Excuse my asking, but what picture concern is this you are talking about?" Sigmund asked.

"The Four Arts," the young lady replied, and Sigmund slapped his thigh with his right hand.

"What did I tell you!" he exclaimed.

"Me!" she cried.

"Myself I am talking to," Sigmund explained, "but anyhow if I was you I wouldn't let that discourage me. He's considering at least two blondes for the part—that I know of—and how many more he's going to consider I couldn't tell you exactly, but no doubt he'll show up with another at the same restaurant to-night."

The young lady stirred uneasily in her seat, and ceased sobbing. She was beginning to think that it might be better to call the conductor

before the old gentleman rambled on any further, but Sigmund caught the uneasy expression in her liquid brown eyes and hastened to reassure her.

"Which to begin at the beginning," he said, "my name is Mr. Sigmund Rosenthal, and I am the father of Ralph Rosenthal, but in case you think I could do anything for you at the studio, miss, all I can tell you is that the boy is very headstrong, and if you want to get a job as a star——"

"A star!" she cried. "Stars don't ride in street-cars. I'm an extra."

"An extra!" Sigmund repeated.

"Sure!" she continued. "I was to come on in the night club as one of the dancers."

"So!" Sigmund said. "Even in his pictures he has blondes in night clubs."

"And now *that's* cold," the young lady said, and her lower lip began to tremble again.

"Say! Say!" Sigmund said, crossing the aisle and sitting down beside her. "You are worrying about nothing. A fine-looking, intelligent girl like you could always get a job as an extra, and besides what do you want to be an extra for?"

"I've got to get a start, haven't I?" she said. "When I came on here from New York, I gave

myself six weeks to find an opening, and I hate to go back to my folks now."

"Why do you got to go back to your folks?" Sigmund asked. "Ain't there plenty regular jobs besides extra in California, like salesladies, bookkeepers, or stenographers?" Sigmund looked critically at the young lady before continuing. "Or maybe you was something else in New York."

"No," she said. "You guessed it, all right. I was a stenographer and a good one, and I was a fool to throw up my job there."

Sigmund nodded sympathetically.

"Well, we all make mistakes," he assured her, "so if you think they'd take you back, why don't you ask them?"

Once more her lower lip began to tremble.

"Might you're broke and ain't got the carfare maybe?" Sigmund inquired, and the young lady nodded, whereupon Sigmund reached into his breast pocket. "I don't ask your name or your address but here is my card," he said, fumbling in a well-filled pocketbook, "and I think I've got enough here to send you back to New York. What is the carfare one way?"

She looked straight ahead of her without replying.

"And naturally that would include meals," Sigmund added, "and an upper."

The young lady shook her head.

"Well, a lower then," Sigmund said.

"I couldn't do it," she replied. "You don't know anything about me."

"Do I *have* to know?" he demanded. "You look like a respectable young lady and *von unsere Leute* too, ain't it?"

She nodded again.

"Then what are you talking nonsense?" he exclaimed. "Over thirty-five years I've been in the cloak and suit business, and I wish that in all that time I wouldn't have took a chance on any worse credit proposition than you are. You could get your job back, couldn't you?"

"I think so," she said. "I worked there for five years, and they wanted me to stay."

"And what did you say the firm was?" he asked.

"Feinmann Brothers," she said, "in the silk business."

"Feinmann Brothers in the silk business!" Sigmund cried. "Why, one of my best friends worked for years by Feinmann Brothers as a salesman, Max Fishbein. Him and me was members together for twenty-five years in the same lodge—Unity Lodge, I. O. M. A. We pretty near elected him tiler once."

"My father was a member of that lodge," she said.

"Your father!" Sigmund repeated. "Might I would know him, then?"

"His name was Henry Berg," she replied.

"Henry Berg!" Sigmund almost shouted, as if Henry had been an old and valued friend although in fact he could just dimly remember Henry to have been a short, stout man with dark eyes and curly hair who had failed twice in the pants business. "Why, sure! I knew your father well. He's dead, ain't it?"

Miss Berg nodded. "He died last year," she said huskily, and Sigmund was about to ask about her mother when he happened to look out of the window in time to see the white brick façade of his hotel sliding rapidly past. He grasped Miss Berg's arm.

"You've got to come and have lunch with mommer and me," he said hastily. "I've just gone past my corner and I'll get, excuse me, hell if I'm late."

"But, Mr. Rosenthal——" she protested as Sigmund pressed the button by the window. He assisted her gently but firmly to her feet, and the next moment they were standing on the platform, where the conductor stood with his hand on the bell-rope and regarded Sigmund with an impudent stare, in which, however, there was a shade of admiration.

"You're a fast worker, ain't you?" he said in low tones to Sigmund, whereat Miss Berg blushed indignantly.

"Well, that's the way it is when you work by moving pictures," Sigmund said, patting her arm reassuringly. "You can't even speak to an old friend of your father's but what someone goes to work and gets you wrong, ain't it?"

He piloted Miss Berg by the elbow through the traffic in front of the hotel and when they arrived on the sidewalk they were immediately opposite the entrance, in which stood a middle-aged lady. From the severe lines of her face, any acquaintance of Ralph Rosenthal would at once have recognized that Ralph's manner with assistant directors, assistant cutters, and other small fry of the motion-picture world was a heritable and inherited trait.

"Mommer," Sigmund began, "this is a young lady by the name of Berg."

Mrs. Rosenthal looked at her husband's companion for only a fraction of a second, and in that one flash received the impression of too much beauty. Here were large brown eyes of a melting tenderness, unbobbed hair wavy and dark, a nose only slightly aquiline, and a figure that was at once a commentary and a reproach

to any middle-aged woman as fond of pastry as Mrs. Rosenthal.

"Where've you been," she asked, "coming back for lunch at this hour and bringing all sorts of people along with you?"

"But, mommer," Sigmund protested, "you remember Henry Berg used to was a member of Unity Lodge with me, ain't it?"

Mrs. Rosenthal shrugged her massive shoulders. "I should know every low-life in that *meshuggeneh* lodge of yours!" she exclaimed.

"Well, this is his daughter," Sigmund explained or rather attempted to explain, for Mrs. Rosenthal had abruptly turned and was plunging toward the hotel coffee-shop before Sigmund had more than begun to speak.

"Sit down in one of them chairs and I'll be right back," he said to Miss Berg, and immediately made after his wife.

He overtook her at the entrance to the coffee-shop.

"Mommer!" he said. "For heaven's sakes, what's the matter with you to-day?"

Mrs. Rosenthal turned and glared at her husband. Thirty-five years ago her eyes had been no less attractive than Miss Berg's, and it was perhaps this feature of that young lady's

lovely countenance which had won Sigmund's unusually ready sympathy.

"What are you chasing me around for?" Mrs. Rosenthal demanded. "Why don't you go back to your friend?"

"Mommer *leben!*" Sigmund cried, as the head waiter of the coffee-shop approached in answer to a gesture from Mrs. Rosenthal.

"I want a table for one," she said firmly, and Sigmund after a moment's hesitation turned and went back to the lobby. But among the loungers he looked in vain for a slight, dark young lady with beautiful eyes and wavy brown hair.

She was gone without leaving her address, her telephone number, or even her given name, and it was this last omission which caused Sigmund several wakeful hours that very night; for in assuring Mrs. Rosenthal over and over again that the young lady really and truly was the daughter of his old friend Henry Berg, he had mentioned her variously as Esther Berg, Ray Berg, Mamie Berg, and Hattie Berg. In fact, at one o'clock the following morning Mrs. Rosenthal was still pointing out to him these discrepancies in an address of much fervour, which reviewed chronologically the times when Sigmund had played pinochle until three o'clock

in the morning, several all-night poker games, and other minor grievances of a long married life.

As a result of his almost sleepless night, it was past eleven o'clock when Sigmund arrived at the studio of the Four Arts Film Corporation, and consequently when he proceeded from the studio entrance to the office of his son, his walk was far from springy and his manner not by ten years as jaunty as on the previous morning. He looked at the doorway of the casting department in passing, and crowded around it was a group of young ladies, all blonde as Siegelinda, and as Mr. Louis Mann used to say, blonder even.

"T'phoo-ee!" Sigmund exclaimed; and when he entered his son's office a moment later he repeated this exclamation, for standing beside his son's desk was another blonde, a young lady whom Ralph considered to be his secretary except in the matter of salary, which was that of just an ordinary stenographer. However, Sigmund's exclamation was entirely uncalled for on the score of friendliness between Ralph and his blonde secretary. Friendliness had ceased between them not one minute previously.

"And you claim you put that New York wire in the file along with the other wires?" he said in rasping tones.

"Yes, Mr. Rosenthal," she said. Her blue eyes were distinctly watery and her voice quavered, but not so much from grief as rage.

"And you also claim that you put that lost laboratory report in the file, don't you?" Ralph continued in even harsher accents.

"Yes, Mr. Rosenthal," she repeated mechanically, although the language she concealed was altogether incompatible with such an innocent blond exterior.

Ralph nodded coldly at his father and moved his head sideways in the direction of the office sofa, indicating that Sigmund be seated. He then lifted the receiver off his telephone.

"Tell Wilkinson to come in," he said.

Almost immediately Wilkinson entered the office. He was designated as Comptroller of the Four Arts Film Corporation although working upon a salary basis quite nominal for a comptroller and not much more than nominal for a bookkeeper.

"Wilkinson," Ralph said, his voice pitched upon a plane suitable to Wilkinson's salary, "you hired Miss Swanson here, didn't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Rosenthal," Wilkinson replied, while there remained unspoken words to the effect that for twenty dollars a week he had secured the pick of two stenographers, the other

being of Mexican extraction on her mother's side and not entirely Castilian on her father's.

"Well, I want you to go down to Bleistift's Stenographers' Agency and get another one," Ralph said, "and give Miss Swanson here a recommendation and three days' wages—half a week, or ten dollars."

The manifest injustice of all this stirred Wilkinson to a most unusual speech.

"But, Mr. Rosenthal," he began, and immediately ceased, for the word *but* aroused in Ralph what he believed to be—as the chief executive of the Four Arts Film Corporation—entirely justifiable indignation.

"Everybody gives me an argument!" he shouted. "Everybody! Do what I tell you, and if she don't like it, she's got her remedy. What do I pay Steen, Geissenhainer and Steen an annual retainer for? If she wants to sue us, let her sue."

Wilkinson cleared his throat. He wanted to ask if he could hire a stenographer for a weekly wage in excess of twenty dollars, such as twenty-two dollars and fifty cents or even twenty-three dollars, but he found it difficult to frame the question in a sentence involving only the words *yes* and *Mr. Rosenthal.* Ralph solved the difficulty for him.

"Why are you standing there, Wilkinson?" he said raspingly. "Go ahead and get that stenographer and don't pay her no more than twenty."

"Yes, Mr. Rosenthal," Wilkinson said, while Miss Swanson passed out of the office ahead of him.

"Now I ain't got a stenographer," Ralph declared after they had left, and Sigmund shrugged his shoulders.

"Say! Anybody who pays stenographers twenty dollars a week," he commented, "is practially out of stenographers no matter *how* many of them twenty-dollar-a-week stenographers he's got."

Ralph flapped his right hand at his father. "In this business you can get plenty of twenty-dollar-a-week stenographers," he said.

"Blondes you can, maybe," Sigmund added; "but for a first-class, A-number-one dark-haired stenographer, which has been for years with a high-grade concern in New York City and knows how to run a filing system and everything, you would got to pay at the lowest thirty-five dollars a week."

"Well, I'd pay such a stenographer thirty-five dollars a week, even if she was bald," Ralph declared, "but you take these here stenographers

which want a job on a movie lot, pop, and they ain't stenographers at all. They're just girls which has got the idea that by balling up your filing system and spelling *received* with the *i's* and the *e's* in the wrong place, y'understand, you'd take pity on them and put them to work acting on a set."

Sigmund nodded slowly. He was beginning to see some justice in his son's attitude toward motion-picture stenographers.

"Why, right now, pop," Ralph continued, "there's hanging round my casting director's office a dozen girls, and very likely I could go over there and find a crackerjack stenographer worth fifty dollars a week in New York, but I wouldn't pay her ten in Hollywood. And why? Because she wouldn't have her mind on her work. All them stenographers over there by the casting office know that practically five motion-picture stars out of six used to be stenographers, and if I hired one of them, the chances is she'd poison my highest price star right at the start of a production, on the off chance that I'd give her the job instead."

"Then you positively wouldn't hire a stenographer which you thought had moving-picture ambitions?" Sigmund asked, trying to make the question sound as casual as possoble.

"I wouldn't even hire her if I thought she ever at one time had such ambitions," Ralph said, "because you never know when an old motion-picture ambition is going to break out in people. It's like opium or any of them headache medicines."

Sigmund nodded again and rose from the sofa.

"Well, I just dropped in to tell you that your mommer and me are liable to go back East most any time now," he said. "It's getting on your mommer's nerves out here. She don't sleep so good, and naturally when she don't sleep it keeps me awake, too."

"It's the change of climate, I suppose," Ralph suggested.

"Yes—the change of climate," Sigmund agreed, "and everything."

He passed out of the studio's executive offices repeating under his breath the name Bleistift, and when he was safe from observation by the girl at the phone, he even made a memorandum of it on an old envelope. And then, sighing to himself, he made a tour of the Four Arts lot, ostensibly to watch the shooting of interesting scenes in the latest Four Arts production; but actually, his heart was not in it. Instead he tentatively formulated a number of newspaper advertisements, to be inserted

in the Lost and Found column, reading, for example:

Fifty dollars' reward will be paid and no questions asked for the given name and address of Miss Berg, daughter of Henry Berg, who failed three times in the pants business between 1895 and 1924, that the advertiser knows of . . .

or

Will young lady answering to the name of Berg please communicate immediately with friend from Melrose Avenue trolley-car and oblige . . .

And he was just thinking up another particularly strong and appealing advertisement when he happened upon the entrance to the casting office. The usual collection of blondes thronged the entrance, and Sigmund resumed the formulation of his proposed advertisement with a sigh of disappointment.

"Wanted," he began to say to himself, "information leading to the arrest—I mean location of . . ."

He proceeded no further, however, for it was at this precise moment that the casting director came out of his office and announced that as no further applications for employment would be considered that day, all parties not engaged in any production should get out of there. Consequently the little crowd began to disperse, and

after it had sufficiently thinned out, there stood revealed in the doorway just one member of it who was not a blonde.

"Miss Berg," Sigmund shouted, and broke into a run.

Miss Berg turned and instead of waiting for him began to walk rapidly toward the studio gate, but Sigmund was sound in wind and limb, and he soon caught up to her.

"Miss Berg, for heaven's sakes why didn't you gave me your full name and address before you run away yesterday?" he said.

"Mr. Rosenthal, you're an old man and I'm not afraid of you—not one bit," she said firmly. "But you've got me wrong—that's all."

"Why—what do you mean, I've got you wrong?" he asked.

"I mean if your own wife can't trust you, why should I?" she retorted, and walked away.

For a moment Sigmund was too stunned to say anything. He was even unable to move, and then he shrugged his shoulders resignedly, but this spirit of resignation persisted only long enough to note Wilkinson, the comptroller of the Four Arts Corporation's involved finances, making for the street-car on his way to Bleistift's stenographic bureau.

Sigmund roused himself and broke into a

brisk trot. He overtook Miss Berg just as she hailed a trolley and seized her by the arm.

"I ain't going to let you get away with no such impression as that," he declared emphatically, "so if you're scared to be seen talking to an old man with gray hair—what there is left of it—in broad daylight with a traffic policeman half a block away, let me know and I'll telephone the old ladies' home to send someone for a witness."

He released her arm and forced a smile of much more confidence than he felt.

"Now, come," he said, "we ain't got no time for joking. Already that feller is on his way down to Bleistift's Agency, and you've got to hurry if you want the job."

Miss Berg shook her head. "I've tried the agencies," she said, "and it seems that I don't screen right."

"Who is talking about screening?" Sigmund cried. "Forget screening, Miss Berg. This is no time to talk from screening. Don't even let on that you was ever at any time ambitious to screen right!" Once more he laid a detaining hand on her arm. "Miss Berg," he said earnestly, "you've got to do this for my sake and for your own, too. Yesterday when I seen you there on the street-car and you said you was the

daughter of Henry Berg, I thought to myself if that boy could find someone like her, y'understand, I could go back East with an easy mind."

"Find someone like *me!*" Miss Berg repeated.

"Sure—like you," Sigmund explained, "for a stenographer. Thirty-five dollars a week he is ready to pay, and believe me, Miss Berg, a boy like my son ain't to be sneezed at by any young lady."

Miss Berg looked puzzled.

"I am talking about you being his stenographer," he assured her, "for the present, I mean, but who can tell what will happen in the future?"

Miss Berg smiled at last. "That conductor was right," she said. "You *are* a fast worker, aren't you?"

"But, Miss Berg, you don't understand," Sigmund protested. "The boy is absolutely at the mercy of blondes. And when a young feller twenty-eight who is already president of a big fillum corporation gets himself entirely surrounded by blondes, what is going to be the end? Am I right or wrong?"

"How do I know?" Miss Berg retorted. "I never even saw your son."

"Did you see Feinmann Brothers before you went to work for them?" Sigmund asked. "So what is the use beating bushes around, Miss

Berg. Let's go into the drug store here and ring up Bleistift's. There's a man there right now trying to find a stenographer for my son."

Miss Berg shrugged her pretty shoulders and followed Sigmund to the telephone, where in much more time than it takes to tell about it, he finally was able to speak to the person in charge of the agency.

"This is Mr. Sigmund Rosenthal," he said, "the father of Ralph Rosenthal of the Four Arts Fillum Corporation. We just heard you got a young lady registered there by the name of Miss Annie Berg."

"Miss Lily Berg," Miss Berg corrected.

"Miss Lily Berg," Sigmund said.

"We have no such person registered here," the person in charge replied.

"Well, you will have in about ten minutes," he continued, "and my son would like to give her a trial, so if the bookkeeper from the studio comes in, tell him to wait till she arrives. She will be right down there in a taxicab."

A moment later he handed Miss Berg into a taxicab, having first told the driver to take her to the agency on Hollywood Boulevard and supplemented these instructions with twice the legal fare and a generous tip.

"And one thing I must got to warn you again,"

he said to her in parting. "So long as you've got this job, and you're going to get it, never let on that you have had ambitions to be a movie actress. My son is awful prejudiced against movie actresses—as stenographers, I mean."

He watched the taxi until it was out of sight, and then he started back to the studio whistling what he believed to be a cheerful tune. After he had proceeded about fifty feet, however, the whistle ceased abruptly. It might even be said that it froze on his lips, for standing on the corner, an observer of all that had passed between Miss Berg and Sigmund, was Mrs. Rosenthal, and the cold, baleful glare with which she regarded her approaching husband would have frozen practically anything such as a whistle, a smile, or the warm anticipation of performing a good deed in a worthy cause.

"Why, mommer," he cried with spurious cordiality, "what are *you* doing here?"

Mrs. Rosenthal's head began to nod, at first slowly but accelerating so rapidly that at the end of a few seconds it became a sort of palsy.

"Loafer!" she almost screamed. "What do you *mean* by it?" And then her jealousy and rage overcame her and she broke into violent weeping. "Dates you got it at your time of life," she sobbed, "with movie actresses yet."

"Me got dates with movie actresses!" Sigmund exclaimed indignantly. "Why, she ain't a movie actress. She's a stenographer." He patted his wife on the shoulder and induced her to walk slowly along in the direction of the studio. "Now you see how you misjudge me, mommer," he said, putting his arm around her.

"Don't you touch me, you low-life," she cried. "I just wanted to satisfy myself, that's all, and now that I know, to-morrow I'm going back East alone, and the first thing I do when I get there is I would see a lawyer."

"Mommer! Mommer!" he exclaimed. "What comes over you all of a sudden? Are you crazy?"

She began to weep anew. "I've been crazy all my life because I thought you never had such ideas like this in your head at all," she wailed, "but now I got all of a sudden sane, and I see the kind of a man what you are—a loafer, a Broadway bum."

For the first time in his married life, Sigmund seized his wife's arm in any other spirit than that of affection. "S'enough, mommer!" he cried. "You said *enough.* You followed me here from the hotel, and you spied on me so you could be satisfied—now I would satisfy you." Without

relaxing his grip on her arm, he almost propelled her into the studio.

There they sat in silence side by side on the office sofa, waiting for Ralph to return from a tour of the Four Arts lot.

"Now listen, folks," he began as he entered, "I'm always glad to see you round here at any time as long as you're here in California, but I'm awful busy just now."

A pulse was beating in Sigmund's cheek, and as a further index to his disturbed mental condition, he was clenching a large brand-new cigar between his teeth, unlighted and reduced by constant chewing to considerably below its market value of four for a quarter.

"Go ahead with your work," he explained to Ralph. "We wouldn't disturb you. We are waiting here for somebody."

Ralph threw up both hands in a gesture of despair. "For heaven's sakes!" he cried. "Couldn't you make an appointment to meet your friends somewhere else? Ain't there no hotel lobbies in Los Angeles?"

Sigmund shrugged gloomily. "The party would be here very soon now," he said.

"The party!" Ralph exclaimed. "What party?"

As if in answer, Wilkinson knocked on the office door.

"Well," Ralph rasped, "did you get the stenographer?"

"Yes, Mr. Rosenthal," Wilkinson said, and ushered in a young lady most becomingly attired in a dark silk costume, which once more Sigmund mentally appraised as being manufactured to retail at twenty dollars. At the sight of her, Mrs. Rosenthal gasped, and it might further be noted that her son Ralph also gasped but managed to conceal it with a slight cough. To be sure, he detected instantly, her nose was too aquiline and her mouth a trifle too large for the young lady to possess screen value, but these blemishes were if anything advantages in a motion-picture studio stenographer; they helped to fling away motion-picture ambitions.

"Now look-a-here, pop," he said, "I want to interview this young lady, so when the party you want to see arrives——"

"This *is* the party we want to see," Sigmund announced, and then he turned to his wife. "Mommer," he said, "I want you to meet Miss Lily Berg—she's the daughter of my old friend Henry Berg, used to was in the pants business a couple times, and her name is *echt* Lily and

nothing else. If there is any questions you would like to ask her, go ahead."

Mrs. Rosenthal's lips were white with mingled rage and embarrassment and she shook her head slowly. As for Miss Berg, she blushed so vividly that a faint sympathetic colour mantled to Ralph's cheeks.

"What's biting you, pop, anyway?" he asked. "Isn't this the young lady that Bleistift's agency sent here?"

"It is," Sigmund replied, "but I engineered the whole thing. It was me that sent her to Bleistift's agency. I butted into your business, Rafie, because I seen you was getting all mixed up with them blonde stenographers, and this here young lady is a *real* stenographer, not a blonde stenographer, and she was for five years with Feinmann Brothers."

Ralph turned to Miss Berg, whose blushes had receded, leaving in their place a most attractive glow. It was then that Ralph discovered the slender column of her neck to be milky white, and he also made a mental note of her wavy, dark, unbobbed hair and her large brown eyes with their long lashes.

"Is it true that you were with Feinmann Brothers for five years?" he asked.

"I gave up my job six weeks ago," she said,

and Ralph was so intrigued by the ivory whiteness of her teeth when she parted her lips to speak that he did not miss the customary response of "Yes, Mr. Rosenthal."

"But I must also tell you, Rafie, that this young lady has had ambitions to become a movie actress," Sigmund explained further.

"Well, what of it?" Ralph asked. "She ain't got them no longer, has she?"

"No," Sigmund said, "but in case you ain't going to hire her for that reason, I want to tell you and mommer here that she goes back to New York to-night at my expense, because she can get her old job back whenever she wants to. And if you've got any objections, mommer, now is the time to make them—otherwise you should please apologize to this young lady that you got such foolish ideas in your old head at your time of life."

Tears came to Mrs. Rosenthal's eyes as she rose to her feet and seized Miss Berg's hand. "If she'll come with us," Mrs. Rosenthal said, "we'll all three of us go back to-night."

Ralph smote the top of his desk with his open palm. "Everybody tries to run my business for me," he exclaimed. "Everybody!" He passed his hand distractedly over his forehead. "For the first time in my life I've got a chance

to get an A-number-one stenographer, mommer," he said, "a nice girl of our own people with good recommendations and everything, and you try to get her away from here." He turned appealingly to Miss Berg. "How much did you say you got paid by Feinmann Brothers?" he asked.

"Thirty-five dollars a week," she replied.

"Then I'll pay you fifty," he said, "and furthermore, pop, you ain't seen practically anything of California yet. Why don't you go up to San Francisco, down to San Diego, across to the Imperial Valley and give a look around?"

Sigmund patted his wife's hand. "What do you say, mommer?" he said. "Who knows if we stayed here a month or so longer, we might find a big kick in it."

Mrs. Rosenthal looked from Miss Berg's lovely face to that of her son, in which she, at least, could still see traces of a childhood innocent of motion-picture presidential guile.

"I'm willing to wait a month," she said, "and see what happens."

A month soon passes, however, and it was nearly five weeks before Sigmund and his wife returned from their delayed tour of California. During their absence, Miss Berg settled down into her new job with the ease of long practice,

and brought the Four Arts filing system to so high a plane of efficiency that not one New York wire, not one laboratory report, not one memorandum of negative cost had gone astray. Furthermore, in his dealings with his secretary, Ralph had grown accustomed to the absence of the phrase "Yes, Mr. Rosenthal," for not once since her employment had she used it. Indeed, as time went on she indulged without reproof from her employer in sentences which even involved the response "Yes, Miss Berg."

It was, in fact, on the very eve of Sigmund's return that Miss Berg entered her employer's office with a copy of a New York wire in her hand.

"Mr. Rosenthal," she said sternly, "you've been interfering with my files again."

"Have I?" Ralph said.

"You put this New York wire which has to do with 'The Anxious Lover' in the file marked 'And So They Were Married,'" she continued, "and the first thing you know we'll have all that Lover stuff in the Married file."

"Will we?" Ralph commented, a trifle absently. "Well, why not?"

Miss Berg looked sharply at her employer.

"Mr. Rosenthal," she said, "what's the matter with you to-day?"

He tapped the top of his desk with a lead pencil. "Sit down, Miss Berg," he said, trying to make his words sound as casual as possible. "I want to get some advice from you."

Miss Berg sat down, a trifle ill at ease.

"The old gentleman comes back to-morrow," Ralph began, "and if ever there was a card, he's one. Do you know what he said to me?"

Miss Berg shook her head.

"He said that I'd got everybody around here saying 'Yes, Mr. Rosenthal,'" Ralph continued. "Now, as a matter of fact, since you've been here, you ain't said, 'Yes, Mr. Rosenthal,' once even—have you?"

"No, Mr. Rosenthal," she said, "I haven't, and I've got a confession to make. I saw everybody else yessing you, and I made up my mind that I would never say 'Yes, Mr. Rosenthal,' to you if I could help it."

"And you're going to stick to that?" he asked huskily.

"I think so," Miss Berg replied.

"No matter what I asked you?" he went on even more huskily.

"I see no reason why I shouldn't," she murmured.

Ralph cleared his throat and began to perspire copiously.

"Supposing I was to say to you something where I particularly wanted you to say 'Yes, Mr. Rosenthal,'" he said. "Supposing I was to tell you that I can't sleep nights for thinking about you and that I want to marry you before the folks go back East—couldn't you just for once oblige me and say 'Yes, Mr. Rosenthal'?"

She looked at his pale, eager face and a smile broke on her quite unscreenable lips.

"Yes, Mr. Rosenthal," she said.

BE WARNED BY MR. WALPOLE

"IT RUNS in the family," said Miss Selina Walkowitz, fanning herself so vigorously that it was difficult to say whether she was fanning herself because she was perspiring or perspiring because she was fanning herself, "so what is the use fighting against it?"

She sighed heavily. It may have been resignation or it may have been despair, and then again it may have been three slices of Mrs. Jenny Silverberg's excellent *mohn kuchen*, two cups of Mrs. Silverberg's no less excellent coffee, with thick cream and three lumps of sugar in each cup, and just a sample portion of Mrs. Silverberg's red currant jelly, the 1926 pack, measuring about eight tablespoonsful.

"I dieted and I *dieted*," she continued. "Some said you shouldn't eat *this* and others said you shouldn't eat *that*, with hot baths and everything, and what did it do for me? In six months I lost six ounces, so now I eat what I please, except, of course, I'm moderate."

She helped herself to another slice of the *mohn kuchen*, and resisted only feebly when Mrs. Silverberg poured out a third cup of coffee.

"But your brother Sidney is slender at that," Mrs. Silverberg said, and in her anxiety to make the observation sound casual and offhand, she coloured slightly. Selina, however, failed to notice it, and flapping one hand, she cleared her mouth of *mohn kuchen* by a convulsive gulp.

"Sidney is something else again," she declared. "He takes already exercise."

She coughed away a slight hoarseness of *mohn kuchen* and finished her coffee before proceeding.

"Which certainly, if people take exercise, Jenny, what can you expect?" she concluded.

"But he didn't take no exercise when *I* knew him," Mrs. Silverberg said.

"That was twenty years ago, Jenny," Selina replied, "and in them days people didn't do such things."

"Well, naturally being a new beginner in the garment business, he had other things to attend to," Mrs. Silverberg said, "although he was a good dancer in them days."

"He was always crazy about dancing," Selina agreed. "Do you remember how jealous your poor husband, *olav hasholom*, was that time at the Ladies' Fuel and Aid Society the way you

danced with Sidney. He pretty near broke the engagement on you, didn't he?"

Mrs. Silverberg waved one finger in a gesture of negation.

"That was long before we was engaged," she said. "It was fifty-fifty that night whether I would be engaged to Sidney or to my poor Jake, but to tell the truth, Selina, I thought Sidney seemed too delicate, so thin he was in them days."

"Well, Jake left you pretty comfortable at that," Selina said by way of consolation, as she looked around her at Mrs. Silverberg's more than tastefully furnished living room. "I see you've got two of them jade plants in pots, Jenny. I wanted to get a couple myself, but Sidney said I should wait and they'd come down after Christmas. They wanted forty dollars apiece for them."

Mrs. Silverberg sighed again and discreetly applied a handkerchief to her eyelashes.

"Money ain't everything," she declared tremulously, "which if I would have children maybe I wouldn't be so lonesome."

Selina raised her eyebrows and shrugged one shoulder.

"If you would have children, Jenny," she declared, "they would have got *their* share and you

would have had *your* share. As it is, you got the whole thing, and what's there to prevent your getting married again, and having anyhow a couple of children. You ain't only forty-one like me."

"I'm forty last Tishabav," Mrs. Silverberg said, "and nowadays what show does a woman of forty stand to get married, especially here in Los Angeles. Men out here ain't got no eyes for anything but floppers."

"That's true," Selina admitted. "Take for instance Sidney, and you know who his latest is? Lola Delizia, and she ain't a day over twenty-three besides making up like already eighteen."

"Well, Sidney looks young, too," Mrs. Silverberg said, and once more Selina flapped her hand.

"I'm *telling* you!" she protested. "That's because he takes exercise. Horseback he rides and tennis with golf and box fighting also. Every morning and evening he weighs himself by the bathroom scales, Jenny, and if he gains one ounce you would think from the way he looks that he had bad reports on his last release or something."

"But this here Lola Delizia, is she—now—fond of Sidney?" Mrs. Silverberg asked, and would

have coloured again except that she was too interested to be embarrassed.

"She claims she is," Selina answered, "but why wouldn't she? She ain't such a well-established star that she could *schimpf* at Sidney Walpole, President of the Walpole Fillum Corporation."

Mrs. Silverberg bit her lower lip and thus prevented it from trembling too noticeably.

"And I suppose," she said huskily, "he's crazy about her."

"Crazy ain't the word," Selina replied. "*Meshugga* is better. Only yesterday I said she overacted in some rushes he was looking at down to the studio, and he jumped on me so hard that until they turned up the lights in the projection room, everybody thought he was talking to his first vice-president and general manager, Mr. Lipke. He don't care what he says to me nowadays."

Here it was Selina's turn to grow tearful, and Mrs. Silverberg patted her gently on the shoulder.

"Well, you've got to expect it that when your brother is in the moving-picture business, Selina, sooner or later he would get married on you," she said.

"But if he would only marry someone his own age, and of his own people like you," Selina wailed.

"Say!" Mrs. Silverberg exclaimed. "The only propositions of marriage I've got so far, is from fellers which thought they would ask me first before they tried to get more capital from a bank for their business on their single name paper. Besides, Selina, I'm an old story to Sidney. He's known me like you have for thirty-five years, and if he does get married on you, y'understand, you've got a home with me, just so long as you can stand an old-fashioned widow who don't know nothing much except cooking."

"Well, maybe he'll get married and maybe he won't," Selina said as she rose to leave, "but he won't get married to no Lola Delizia without a struggle from *me*, I'll tell you that."

"And from me, too," Mrs. Silverberg almost added, but instead she pressed Selina's hand sympathetically.

"For my part I think Sidney's too sensible to do any such thing," she assured her, "and anyhow, lots can happen to prevent it."

"Then it's got to happen fast, because her contract runs out next week and Sidney's liable to marry her if it's only to head off the Celebrated Players-Kaliski people," Selina said

mournfully. "They've made her a wonderful offer only yesterday. So I guess if she ain't said so in as many words, she's put it up to him that if they're ever going to get married, now is the time."

"Well, it may be for the best," Mrs. Silverberg observed as she kissed Selina good-bye. "Men have married moving-picture actresses before, and they've turned out to be very good wives—for moving-picture actresses, I mean."

She watched Selina walk down the path to the street.

"Let me know if there's anything new," she called after her, and Selina nodded as she entered her car. It was an expensive car, with a special custom body that flashed and twinkled in the bright California sunlight—the kind of car, she reflected, that was just the setting for the blonde and dainty Lola Delizia, and conversely not the setting for a widow with rapidly graying hair, inclined to stoutness, although of clear, ruddy complexion and by no means bad-looking for her age. Then it occurred to her that Mrs. Silverberg's age was her own, minus one year, while Sidney had passed his forty-third birthday even though he did seem to be thirty-five, and she became so indignant at the thought of her brother meanly taking advantage

of his adipose family by playing tennis and riding horseback that she rapped on the window more violently than she had intended.

"Am I going too fast?" the chauffeur asked.

"I *want* you to go fast," Selina said. "I want to reach the studio before Mr. Lipke goes home."

Mrs. Silverberg's home was at Beverly, a good five miles from the studio of the Walpole Film Corporation. Nevertheless, ten minutes later, Selina stepped from her brother's car and entered the office of Marcus Lipke, first vice-president and general manager of the Walpole Film Corporation, who, while he sat at a most impressive-looking desk, seemed to be at least two sizes too large for it.

"Mr. Lipke," she began, "has my brother gone?"

"A question!" Lipke exclaimed. "He's gone pretty near two hours ago, and if he ain't playing tennis, then he's riding horseback, and if he ain't riding horseback, then he's taking a Turkish bath."

He waved Selina to a chair.

"This morning he got delivered to him from New York three pairs of white flannel pants," he explained. "He had them cut an inch too small round the waist and now he's going to ride

a couple of horses to death so as to make himself fit them."

"He'll ruin his health," Selina wailed.

"He'll ruin his temper, if it ain't ruined already," Lipke said. "What do you suppose makes him all the time mad lately, if it ain't all this here horseback riding getting on his nerves?"

"I guess he ain't feeling so good on account of taking exercise," Selina replied. "Anybody's health is bound to suffer from exercise."

"Forget his health," Lipke cried. "His health is A number one, because exercise ain't harmful to the health if you *like* it."

"But he *does* like it," Selina insisted.

"He likes it like a cat likes getting wet," Lipke declared. "He likes exercise like I like it, and I wouldn't even exert myself to play Kelly pool. That's how fond of exercise I am."

"Well, you and me could both do with a little exercise, I guess," Selina said. "We ain't neither of us featherweights exactly."

"Say, listen," Lipke began earnestly, "your brother and me we ain't built the same. He's got to exercise to keep down his weight. Last year he had flu for a week as you remember, and he gained four pounds because he couldn't exercise, but you take what I've went through last week, and I *lost* four pounds."

"Did you have the flu last week?" Selina exclaimed. "I thought you were in San Francisco."

"I *was* in San Francisco, and the time what I had with them fellers at the Lugano-American bank, Miss Walkowitz, you wouldn't believe it all."

Selina drew her chair closer to Lipke's desk.

"Are they acting up again?" Selina asked anxiously.

"Acting up!" Lipke cried. "Listen! If we lose Delizia to the Celebrated Players-Kaliski people, the Lugano-American Bank will close down on us, that's all."

"But if you meet the offer which the Celebrated Players made Delizia," Selina said, "then you can't make no money on the next picture. I heard Sidney say so."

"Even so, we won't lose so much as if the bank shuts down on us," Lipke explained. "We would then got to work with the distributors' money, and when distributors advance the negative cost of a picture, Miss Walkowitz, all they want is your shirt, your right eye, and your heart's blood plus 10 per cent."

"And how much would the next picture cost?" Selina inquired.

"Not less than a quarter of a million," Lipke

said, "but of course, if the bank lends us a hundred thousand or a hundred and a quarter, we could manage the rest."

For a moment Selina looked at Lipke and wondered just how much he knew about Sidney's feelings toward Delizia. It was only a moment, however, for Lipke at once satisfied her curiosity.

"And we wouldn't need *that* much," he added, "if Walpole gets away with it this evening."

"This evening!" Selina exclaimed.

"Perhaps I shouldn't ought to told you this," Lipke said, "but if everything goes right, Walpole is going to propose to her this evening."

"*Ai Gewald!*" Selina groaned. "Then it's too late."

"What's too late?" Lipke asked.

"I came here to ask you you should use your influence with Sidney and beg him he shouldn't marry that girl," Selina said. "It'll wreck his life if he does."

"It'll wreck his life if he don't—or anyhow put a big crimp in it," Lipke declared emphatically, "and as for using my influence with your brother, Miss Walkowitz, I ain't got any. He coppers every bit of advice I give him. Besides, I think Delizia is all right at that."

He rose from his chair by way of ending the

interview. "And anyway, he's got it coming to him," he said.

"Why, you don't know anything about her, that *we* haven't heard or something?" Selina asked tremulously.

"What's there to know?" Lipke retorted. "When a man forty-three marries a girl twenty-three, even if she ain't a motion-picture star, which she *is*, y'understand, he can't ride horseback forever. Ten years from now, he'll be having his pants cut two inches too large for him and growing up to them in a few days, and some *other* guy'll be riding horseback to win her."

As a matter of fact, although Lipke was not aware of it, his prophecy was even then undergoing an anticipation of twenty years, for less than half an hour later two figures on horseback proceeded slowly along the Beverly bridle path, and one of them, while masculine and slim, was not Sidney Walpole.

"I'm not going to, Eddie, and that's all there is *to* it," said his companion who was of course none other than Lola Delizia herself. There was a harsh note in her voice that contrasted badly with her lovely oval face, her violet eyes, and ash-coloured hair. To be sure, her mouth was a trifle too small and straight, but when the motion-picture audiences of the country saw

that mouth slightly open in an engaging smile, all was forgotten in the resulting display of regular pearly teeth. However, she was not smiling now.

"I'd be crazy to do a thing like that," she concluded, and the line of her small mouth became thinner and straighter than usual.

"Now listen, Lola," said Edward Gonzales pleadingly. "I'll have my divorce in three weeks, and we'll go right over to Mexico and get married. Now what do you say?"

It would be difficult to convince the motion-picture audiences of America that Edward Gonzales had pleaded so earnestly and so vainly with one particular woman, when there were literally thousands, and even hundreds of thousands of young, attractive, single, and perhaps married women who at his slightest nod would have gone right over to Tierra del Fuego, let alone right over to Mexico; for of all the popular young leading men who had worked for the Celebrated Players-Kaliski studio, none had ever received within several hundred letters, daily, so many and such ardent mash notes. It was indeed hard to convince Eddie himself that he was being repulsed. Only once before had he been obliged to plead earnestly for the affections of a female, and that was when he pro-

posed to the plaintiff in his divorce suit, but this had occurred more than three years ago, when Edward Gonzales was just Eddie Wilkinson and a clerk in a large chain shoe store.

"Kaliski is willing to have you write your own contract," he urged, "and we'll be working right side by side on the Celebrated Players lot, you and me in one picture together. Do you ever think what a combination that'd make?"

In point of fact, this was precisely what Lola *was* thinking. She saw her billing, which had been particularly generous on the part of the Walpole Film Corporation, undergoing a matrimonial change in any event, but whereas as the wife of Walpole it would increase in size and colour, as the wife of Edward Gonzales it would shrink to a lettering perhaps no larger than that of Gonzales himself.

"You've got me wrong, Eddie," she said. "It isn't a question of contracts or billing or anything like that. I'm real fond of Walpole."

Eddie reined in his horse, and put a detaining hand on Lola's arm. "You're *what?*" he exclaimed. "Say that again, and expect me to believe it, *will* you?"

"I'll say it again, and you've *got* to believe me," Lola insisted. She looked squarely into Eddie's fine black eyes, which were beginning

to fill with tears of wounded pride if not of actual grief, and she at once proved to herself anew, that as a combination star with Eddie, she could never hold her own against his screen attractiveness, for after one glance at Eddie's handsome face, made handsomer by disappointed love, a great sob shook her involuntarily.

"For God's sakes, Eddie," she burst out, "don't make it no harder for me. I've got to look out for myself, ain't I?"

Eddie took his hand from her arm. "All right," he said. "*Look* out for yourself. You'll *have* to look out for yourself with a bimbo like him."

"Now, you can't talk *that* way, Eddie," she protested.

"I ain't going to talk *any* way, not to you no longer," he declared. "After this, you and me are strangers, no matter *what* happens."

He wheeled his horse around, and the next moment he was headed for Hollywood in a cloud of dust while Lola rode slowly on in the opposite direction. She was already more than half an hour late for an appointment which she had with Walpole at one of Beverly's many riding academies, but she allowed her horse to slacken his pace nevertheless. She was thinking hard, and hard thinking is something to which the average

motion-picture actress must devote her whole time, for thought of any description is rarely indulged in by motion-picture actresses.

Moreover, Lola was not particularly good at figures. The Kansas grade school of which she was nearly a graduate had done its best, but when it came to working out such sums as subtracting the salary she received from the Walpole Film Corporation from the salary offered by the Celebrated Players-Kaliski Corporation, Lola was simply not there. She was obliged to stop her horse entirely, and even then she was not quite sure whether she was doing right in accepting Walpole as a suitor, as opposed to five thousand two hundred and fifty dollars a week for a minimum of three pictures which was the Celebrated Players-Kaliski's non-matrimonial proposition.

Thus when she arrived at the riding academy, Walpole had been waiting for nearly three quarters of an hour, and as he was less accustomed to waiting than to keeping other people waiting, he seemed a trifle annoyed about it.

"I thought something happened to you," he said, after he had raised his hat with some difficulty, for, like Lola's mathematics, Sidney's manners required more concentration than a precarious seat on horseback afforded.

"I came pretty near not coming at all," Lola replied, and had she been able with any accuracy to multiply five thousand two hundred and fifty dollars by the number of weeks it would take to make three Celebrated Players-Kaliski pictures, her statement would have been entirely truthful, "I've got an awful headache."

This at least was no more than the fact. Mental arithmetic had always given her a headache, even in her Kansas school days, and at once Sidney became the picture of concern.

"Then if that's the case, we won't ride today," he said.

"Oh, I'm all right," Lola assured him, but the opportunity for avoiding a solid hour of jouncing up and down on the top of a restive horse was, to Sidney, a stroke of luck too good to lose. He immediately climbed down from his horse, and suppressed a sigh of relief.

"You've got to take care of yourself, Lola," he said. "You won't be fit for anything tomorrow, and we're on the last five hundred feet of that picture, too."

"I was going to speak to you about that," Lola began, but Sidney forestalled her.

"Now listen," he said, "before you talk to me about that, I want to talk to you about something else."

"About something else?" Lola repeated. "You mean the new contract?"

"Get off that horse, and I'll tell you," Sidney replied.

"But how'll we get back to town?" she asked after he had assisted her to the ground.

"It's a funny quincidence," he replied, "but on my way up here, I see my car standing in front of a house down the drive. It ain't more than a block away, so just you stay here and I'll be back with it in a minute."

He strode away rapidly in the direction of Mrs. Silverberg's house in front of which stood his robin's-egg-blue car, for true to her promise that she would let Mrs. Silverberg know if there was anything new, Selina had immediately returned to Beverly after hearing from Lipke that her brother's latest love affair had reached its climax.

"I'll be out in a moment, Harry," he said to the chauffeur. "I just want to let my sister know that I'll send you back for her."

He walked up Mrs. Silverberg's garden path, and as he approached the house, a strangely familiar odour assailed his nostrils. It was not entirely fish, and it was not entirely onions, but what really identified it for Sidney was the

Spanish saffron which lent its fragrance, if you want to call it that, to the characteristic smell of mimosa which pervades the Los Angeles suburb of Beverly.

"*Gefüllte* fish!" Sidney exclaimed to himself. "I ain't tasted that in twenty years."

He rang the bell and the door was opened by Mrs. Silverberg herself.

"Sidney!" she exclaimed. "What brings *you* here?"

Her cheeks were ruddier than usual and her eyes a trifle brighter, for after Selina had broken the news of her brother's impending engagement, she had wept copiously, and friendship if nothing else demanded that Mrs. Silverberg mingle her tears with Selina's.

"Selina and me was just talking about you," she continued. "She's here inside. Won't you come in?"

Sidney's nostrils dilated to the delicate bouquet of Mrs. Silverberg's supper, and his mouth watered so copiously that he was obliged to swallow twice before replying.

"I just wanted to tell Selina that I've borrowed the car and I'll send it right back as soon as I'm through with it," he said. "It'll be here in half an hour."

"But Selina's going to stay for supper," Mrs. Silverberg said. "Why don't you sit down and eat it with us?"

"In *these* clothes!" Sidney exclaimed. "I look like a wreck."

Mrs. Silverberg nodded and smiled ironically.

"I seen you when you looked a whole lot worser, Sidney," she said, and mentally she contrasted the Tzvee Walkowitz of twenty years ago, an assistant foreman in her father's garment factory, and usually dressed for the part, with the prosperous film manufacturer whose riding breeches had cost more than Tzvee's entire wardrobe for the years 1900 to 1904, both inclusive. Nevertheless, she was obliged to admit to herself that in spite of certain lines of responsibility in Sidney's bronzed face, he hardly looked a day older. He possessed almost the same quantity of hair on his head, and only on the sides was it graying slightly, while her own abundant hair, though wavy and most becomingly arranged, was almost white in places.

"You look like you needed one or two good meals, Sidney," she said. "You're thin like anything."

"And I want to stay that way," he declared. "But I'll tell you this much anyhow: if it wasn't

that I had an important engagement, Jenny, I couldn't resist that smell no matter *what* it did to my weight."

He pressed Mrs. Silverberg's hand almost affectionately.

"Some other time, Jenny," he added, "but to-night I've got business to attend to."

Ten minutes later, he was attending to it with Lola Delizia seated by his side as they speeded toward Hollywood in his car. He had at first placed his arm around her waist, but the memory of Edward Gonzales's tear-filled eyes persisted, and she drew herself away from Sidney.

"Please don't," she said, and then tempered it by adding: "Not yet."

"What's the matter, Lola?" Sidney asked. "Ain't you fond of me?"

"Of course I'm fond of you," Lola replied, "but I've got a headache."

To prove it, she rested her head on his shoulder and began to pat his hand.

"The Celebrated Players-Kaliski people are after me all the time, Sid," she told him, "and I don't know *what* to say to them."

Sidney took her hand in both of his and pressed it warmly.

"Tell them that you're working for a party who can meet any offer they make," he said.

"I did tell 'em that," she answered, "and they raised their offer."

"Well, they couldn't raise the offer I'm going to make to you now," Sidney retorted. The crucial moment was fast approaching and Lola instinctively snuggled closer. Although to be quite fair, her heart wasn't in it. It was only her ignorance of arithmetic that had brought her there at all.

"What is it?" she inquired.

"Well, I'm offering you the advantage of the Community Property Law of the State of California," Sidney explained.

"And what's that?" she murmured faintly, although every morning she read all the published divorce cases, in which the Community Property Law is always invoked.

"Why, the Community Property Law in California gives a wife a half interest in all the husband's property which he gets after his marriage," Sidney continued, "and as I expect to make a couple of million in the next few years, Lola, how about it?"

He paused for a reply just as the automobile slowed up for traffic at the end of the bridle path which had paralleled the automobile road for its entire length. Lola's lips were parted. She had already formulated a speech in which she

had combined modesty with affection, and had even begun to take a long breath in anticipation of her answer, when she looked out of the window, and standing by the side of Sidney's automobile was a familiar figure on horseback—familiar, that is to say, to the entire motion-picture public of America, as well as to Lola. It was Edward Gonzales.

Her lips closed again, after she had expelled the long breath in a tremulous sigh, and once more she patted Sidney's hand.

"I'll have to think this over," she said, and added the word *dear* to soften her reply.

"What for?" Sidney exclaimed. He was beginning to perspire, while his face grew fiery red, and neither perspiration nor apoplexy is calculated to make a forty-odd-year-old man seem more attractive. "I'm telling you, that the Community Property Law protects you no matter what happens to me."

"Sidney!" she cried indignantly. "Do you think I doubt your word? Besides, it isn't a question of property. I want to ask my mother's advice."

"Your mother's advice!" Sidney repeated. "You never asked your mother's advice in any of our other dealings."

"I know," Lola admitted, "but when it's a ques-

tion of marriage, Sidney, I think I ought to get her on the long-distance phone. It don't cost much to talk to Wichita, Kansas, after midnight, I mean, and I think I owe her *that* much consideration."

Once more she laid her head on his shoulder and began to pat his hand.

"To-morrow afternoon, I'll meet you at the same time in front of the riding academy," she said, "and I'll give you my answer then."

She looked up at him coyly.

"And I'm pretty certain it'll be *Yes*," she concluded, but when Sidney attempted to seal the following evening's betrothal with a kiss, *nunc pro tunc* as of its due date, he was again repulsed, and Lola's headache became worse. At least that was the reason she gave for not dining with him at one of the larger hotels, and thus when Selina returned from Mrs. Silverberg's house to the Walpole home on Sunset Boulevard, she was surprised to find Sidney, still in his riding clothes, seated in what the realtor who had rented them the property called the library.

"What's the matter, Sidney?" she said. "I thought you had an engagement. Ain't you feeling good?"

For answer, Sidney jumped from his chair and threw open every window in the room.

"T'phoo-ee!" he cried. "The whole place reeks like the dickens from onions."

"Well, what *would* it reek like?" Selina asked. "I've been eating *gefüllte* fish by Jenny Silverberg's, and believe me, Sidney, it was good.'

Sidney extended one hand, palm outward.

"Please!" he said. "If you are going to talk to me, turn your face the other way. I don't listen with my nose exactly."

Selina sat down ponderously and took off her hat with the utmost deliberation.

"Nobody can't drive me out of my own library just yet, Sidney," she began. "Wait till you are married. That'll be time enough."

Sidney turned on her suspiciously.

"What do you mean—till I am married?" he demanded, and Selina flapped her hand at him.

"It's bound to come sooner or later," she retorted. "Some other twenty-year-old empty-headed near-star will get a hold of you, even if this one turned you down."

There was little brotherly affection in the glare with which he greeted this sally.

"So!" he said. "You think she turned me down, do you? Well, she didn't do no such thing, and furthermore, Selina, after to-morrow night, I would ask you to be very careful what you say about Miss Delizia."

"Why to-morrow night?" Selina asked. "Is it postponed on account of rain or something? I seen her go by with you in the car this afternoon, and the way she had her head on your shoulder when she passed Jenny Silverberg's house, I thought everything was settled already."

Sidney started to leave the room without replying, but with surprising agility for her weight, Selina reached the door before him.

"Well, *is* it or *ain't* it?" she insisted, "because if it is, I want to make my plans accordingly."

"Oh! You've got plans, *have* you?" he said.

"Yes, I have. That woman and me could never live in the same house together," Selina replied, her voice trembling slightly, but Sidney apparently didn't notice it.

"Then in that case," he said, "ask me to-morrow night, and I'll tell you the exact date when you should start to move."

However, Selina possessed the same impulsive disposition and the same habit of rapid judgment which had made so signally for her brother's business success. She didn't wait for the following evening. By three o'clock the next afternoon she was installed in Jenny Silverberg's home so permanently that she had even done Jenny's marketing—including a breast of veal to be cooked by Jenny with garlic, under the

title *gedaempfte rinderbrust,* a bunch of choice asparagus, and other dainties more calculated to add weight to the menu and the diners both.

"I wash myself of him entirely, Jenny," she declared. "I don't care what happens to him now."

"Say!" Mrs. Silverberg protested. "No matter who he marries, a brother is always a brother."

"But a sister-in-law ain't always a sister-in-law," Selina said. "Not by me, she ain't, anyway."

"Well, some sister-in-laws get along very well together," Mrs. Silverberg remarked.

"I know they do," Selina agreed, "and do you know who it was that I wanted for a sister-in-law?"

Mrs. Silverberg nodded. Ever since her husband had died and she had changed her residence from Washington Heights, New York, to Beverly Hills, California, she had been so careful to conceal her affection for Sidney from Selina, that it was impossible for Selina not to suspect it immediately.

"But now I wouldn't want you to be," Selina continued. "It's enough that Sidney takes chances with his money without he should drag you in also."

"Why, what do you mean?" Mrs. Silverberg asked.

"Maybe I shouldn't tell you, on account Lipke said it was confidential," Selina explained, "but unless Sidney marries Lola Delizia, she'll go with the Famous-Players Kaliski people, and if she does, then Sidney's bank will not advance the cost of the next picture, and Sidney will have to get it somewhere else."

"Well, I paid an inheritance tax on a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars from my poor husband's estate only last month, Selina," Jenny said.

"And if the picture was a flop, where would you be?" Selina asked.

Jenny was about to say that she would be at least married to Sidney Walpole, but instead she shrugged her shoulders.

"A woman would do a whole lot for someone she likes, Selina," she said. "But anyhow, what's the use talking? My banker has got it all invested in conservative bonds, Selina. Widows' securities, he calls them, and I suppose widows' securities they'll remain till the end of my days."

She rose and smoothed her gray hair with one hand.

"Well, I guess I'll put on my kitchen apron and get busy," she said cheerfully. "*Gedaempfte rinderbrust* won't cook itself."

"Let me help you," Jenny cried.

"You stay right here and rest," Mrs. Silverberg insisted. "To-day you're a guest, but to-morrow we turn out the second floor. It's my regular day for doing it. I get my exercise that way."

Thus when Sidney Walpole came slowly riding along the bridle path on his way to his appointment with Lola Delizia, a most delicious odour scented the atmosphere of that part of Beverly Hills contiguous to the hundred-and-fifty-foot frontage owned by Mrs. Silverberg. And although Sidney was a prey to the keenest anxiety, his nostrils dilated, nevertheless, as he passed that particular frontage.

"That woman spends her life cooking something with onions," he muttered to himself, and then the matter immediately disappeared from his mind, for as he approached what a title writer might have called the trysting place, he saw that Delizia was in earnest conversation with another equestrian, whom he immediately recognized as Edward Gonzales. A wave of entirely unnecessary jealousy swept over Sidney,

unnecessary because at that very moment Delizia was giving Edward his congé in words of the utmost finality.

"I like you, Eddie, and all that, but you're through with me, and don't kid yourself that you ain't," she declared. "When I marry Walpole, I'm going to cut out everything. See? And you're the first."

Eddie Gonzales shrugged his shoulders.

"And after you divorce him, what?" he inquired.

"There ain't going to be a divorce ever," she retorted, and met Eddie's last agonized look with a cold stare.

"Now I guess you'd better go," she added, and Eddie without another word wheeled his horse and started down the path at a sharp canter. Now ordinarily, Gonzales and Sidney were on excellent terms, but as he approached Sidney, he glared at him so savagely that Sidney felt much encouraged. He had always looked on Gonzales as a dangerous rival, if only as one of the Celebrated Players-Kaliski's adherents, but rivals who are really dangerous smile with success, and Sidney at once became a cheerful winner.

"Well, Lola," he said after the first greetings were exchanged, not without effort, for Sidney's horse was strange to him and seemed quite a

spirited animal, "did you get your mother on the phone last night?"

"I'll tell you all about it," Lola said as they started off in the same direction as Gonzales but at a much slower pace. Now, in point of fact, she had not exactly telephoned her mother, but she had instead telephoned someone who was even more than a mother to her, namely, Mr. Abraham Kitzinger, senior member of the law firm of Kitzinger, O'Malley, & Katz, and what those practitioners didn't know about motion-picture law and finance had never been a matter of contention among motion-picture business men and women, always bearing in mind that these ladies and gentlemen are particularly contentious.

"Is it all right?" he asked. But from Lola's own lips he never actually heard the answer, for she smiled at him so dazzlingly that involuntarily he reached for her waist with his right hand, and in doing so, he pulled his horse's head around so that the two animals collided. What happened after that was not entirely clear either to Sidney or Lola, for as luck would have it, a large telephone pole, bearing fifty wires, reared its height immediately opposite the point where Sidney's wooing had almost but not quite reached its culminations.

As a result of this near culmination, precisely fifty Beverly Hills subscribers found their telephone service temporarily out of order. The horse was not nearly as much injured as the telephone pole. Almost immediately it scrambled to its feet, and went careering madly down the bridle path without a rider, in hot pursuit of Lola's horse, to which she clung desperately. As for Sidney, it was more than six hours before he opened his eyes to find himself undressed and in bed. A large hairy hand was in possession of his left wrist and a pair of rubber-tired spectacles loomed above his pillow.

"Where am I?" he asked faintly.

"Now you mustn't talk," said the owner of the hairy hand, and Sidney turned his head to look around him. The effort cost him more agony than it was worth, for he discovered nothing.

"Can you see all right?" the doctor asked.

Sidney nodded feebly. "And I also smell," he said. "Ain't this Mrs. Silverberg's house?"

"It is," the doctor replied.

"I thought so," Sidney murmured, and closed his eyes again.

"Is Lola all right?" he asked presently.

"Her horse was stopped by somebody," the doctor said, "but she wasn't hurt a bit."

"That's good," Sidney whispered as the doctor administered a sedative, and for twelve hours he slept as soundly as anybody can sleep who has escaped a facture of the skull but not a slight fracture of the humerus and two cracked ribs. When he awoke, the doctor was not there, but instead he saw the soft brown eyes and the ruddy complexion of Mrs. Silverberg, and in her hand was a cup of coffee which filled the room with a comforting aroma.

"The doctor said you should have this through a feeding tube when you woke up," she said. "How's your head?"

"Better," Sidney replied and immediately applied himself to the coffee.

"That," he declared, "is the best cup of coffee I've tasted in a dawg's age."

"It's because I put sugar in it," Mrs. Silverberg said.

"What d'ye want to do that for?" he protested feebly. "Sugar makes you fat."

"Sure, I know," Mrs. Silverberg admitted, "but when you worked by my father *olav hashalom*, you took already three lumps in your coffee."

He pressed her hand involuntarily. "You've certainly got a good memory," he said. "That was twenty-two years ago."

"I can remember the things you said and done twenty-two years ago, Sidney, like it was yesterday already," she replied. "I can remember when you ett by our house, all the food you was fond of. *Gefüllte* fish you loved. *Gedaempfte rinderbrust* you was crazy about, and the *mohn kuchen* you could eat!"

"Don't! Don't!" he exclaimed. "I feel myself getting fat just listening to you."

What further reminiscences of twenty years ago they would have indulged in were interrupted by an altercation on the landing outside the bedroom door.

"I've got to see him, I tell you," said a masculine voice.

"The doctor says not," Selina protested.

"I don't care about no doctors," Lipke shouted. "This is life or death without doctor's advice."

He opened the door and literally burst into the room.

"So, Walkowitz," he cried, forgetting the Anglicization of Sidney's surname in his excitement, "horses you've got to ride at your age yet! Automobiles ain't slow enough for you!"

"Mr. Lipke!" Mrs. Silverberg exclaimed, "Are you crazy or something?"

"Mrs. Silverberg, please keep out of this," Lipke said.

"Here! Here!" Walpole protested. "Who do you think you're talking to? An assistant cameraman?"

"I'm talking the way I please, Walkowitz," Lipke retorted. "It's time you should hear it a few home truths. You neglected your business long enough. Horses you are riding, tennis you are playing, with golluf and squash and Turkish baths also, just to keep down your weight, and your business you don't give a button for."

"Lipke," Walpole said feebly, "you forget yourself."

"Sure I do," Lipke continued. "I've forgotten myself too long, but now I'm going to remember myself. I'm also an executive in the Walpole Fillums."

He pulled a folded newspaper from his pocket.

"Here," he said, "read *this* once."

"Mr. Lipke!" Mrs. Silverberg cried. "We were trying to keep it from him."

"Keep *nothing* from him!" Lipke shouted, thrusting the paper at Sidney. "Read there where it says: 'Movie Stars in Thrilling Runaway,' and read there also where it says that the Celebrated Players-Kaliski Studios have now got Delizia under a contract for three years."

"It can't be true," Sidney gasped.

"Can't it?" Lipke cried. "Well, let me tell you that this morning nine o'clock, Finzi of the Los Angeles Branch of the Lugano-American Bank had me on the phone, and he had it straight from Delizia herself. It happened last night. Also she's going to marry this here Gonzales or Wilkinson or whatever you call him as soon as he gets his divorce. He stopped her horse and saved her life, she says, so what do you know about *that?*"

"But the feller's a beggar, a pauper," Sidney said. "He spends every cent he makes. He ain't got one nickel to rub against another."

"Who wants to rub nickels in the motion-picture business?" Lipke exclaimed. "Nickels is nix in this business, and in *our* business, Walkowitz, we need a hundred thousand dollars, and we need it quick, because as soon as Finzi heard the news, he shut down on us for our next picture."

"*Ai Gewald!*" Sidney groaned, and for the next half a minute everybody was silent.

"Well," Mrs. Silverberg said at last, "banks ain't the only ones what loan money."

Here Selina burst out indignantly: "Jenny," she said, "if you lend all that money, you're a fool."

"I'd rather be a fool than the way I am,"

Jenny said, and once more there was a long silence.

"Well," Lipke said almost cordially, "after all, Walkowitz is still a sick man, and we can afford to think the matter over."

"Maybe I'm a sick man and maybe I ain't," Sidney declared. "But we ain't going to take this lady's money. We can get all the money we need by having our distributors advance the negative cost."

"Then we won't make 50 per cent. of what we did make on our last picture," Lipke said.

"Maybe we won't," Sidney agreed, "but you'll get your salary just the same, and as for me, I ain't going to live so high."

He turned painfully toward Mrs. Silverberg and took her rather rough hand in his.

"Hereafter I ain't going to eat so much in restaurants!" he declared. "I'm going to eat at home, *gedaempfte rinderbrust* and *gefüllte* fish and three lumps of sugar in my coffee every meal."

"Sidney!" Selina cried. "What do you mean?"

"Jenny knows what I mean," he said. "Don't you, Jenny?"

Mrs. Silverberg nodded. "And you ain't going to ride horseback again, are you?" she asked anxiously.

Sidney patted her hand reassuringly. "Why should I try to reduce any more?" he inquired. "Should people believe that my wife is starving me?"

He lay back on his pillow contentedly and closed his eyes.

"I think I could do with another cup coffee, Jenny," he said, "and if there's any of that *gedaempfte rinderbrust* left, don't bother to warm it. I'll eat it cold."

THAT'S THE WAY IT GOES

BUT you're *doch* only a bookkeeper," said Mr. Noblestone the business broker as he sat at a table in the Café Cosmopol on lower Second Avenue and gazed gloomily at a cup of lukewarm coffee.

"Well, everybody's got to be something for a start, ain't it?" George Kiskin protested. "Which I was educated in the old country for a pianist, and to-day yet with a little practise, y'understand, I could go out and make my fifty-sixty dollars a week and stick there, y'understand, but a bookkeeper in a business like the Berelman Waist Company, Mr. Noblestone, if he keeps not only books but also tabs, understand me, could work his way up."

"What do you mean—tabs?" Mr. Noblestone asked.

"By tabs I mean tabs," Kiskin said. "Some people think a bookkeeper ain't got no brains, otherwise he wouldn't be a bookkeeper, Mr. Noblestone, and in particular Mr. Berelman thinks this."

"Why shouldn't he?" Noblestone remarked, shrugging his shoulders."

"He has my permission!" Kiskin said, "because he don't take it too particular to keep no secrets from me like I would be a salesman or a designer instead of a bookkeeper, Mr. Noblestone, and the consequences is that there is two people in the Berelman Waist Company which knows the ins and outs of the business—and them two people is Mr. Berelman and the bookkeeper."

Kiskin flipped the ash off a four-cent Havana second, which from its odour might easily have been a third or a fourth, and looked meaningly at Mr. Noblestone.

"So therefore, Mr. Noblestone, for two years now I am keeping tabs on which ones of Mr. Berelman's customers ain't so satisfied," Kiskin continued, "which I figure that if you could fix things up between me and the Lady Marjory Waist Company—maybe I only have got eight hundred and twenty-six dollars in the Dry Dock Bank, but I've also got anyhow two prospective accounts in Chicago, one in St. Louis, three in Cleveland, and a couple more in Buffalo, Saracuse, and Rochester, and if I couldn't get them accounts away from the Berelman Waist Company in less than sixty days, then the Lady Mar-

jory people could keep my eight hundred and twenty-six dollars and cancel the partnership."

"But why must you got to be a partner?" Noblestone asked. "Why not a salesman?"

"What future has a salesman got that a pianist ain't?" Kiskin asked. "I quit piano playing and become a bookkeeper so as I could work my way up to be a partner and not a salesman, Mr. Noblestone, so what is the use talking to me about salesmen? And besides, do I need a business broker to make me a salesman and not a partner?"

"But a partner with only eight hundred and twenty-six dollars, who wants him?" Noblestone said.

"Never mind," Kiskin retorted. "To new beginners like the Lady Marjory Waist Company, eight hundred and twenty-six dollars ain't to be sneezed at neither."

Noblestone shook his head doubtfully.

"Even new beginners I couldn't go to with an eight hundred and twenty-six dollar proposition," he said. "If it was two thousand dollars maybe, or if you had some other prospects besides copping out Berelman's accounts, then it might be something else again. You ain't got *chotzig* a rich relation which might die on you or something?"

"I've got one aunt and a cousin in Russland, Mr. Noblestone, and when I studied piano, he studied violin at the Conservatory of Harkov, and so far he ain't got Kreisler and Heifetz laying awake nights from thinking he would come over here and spoil things for them exactly, although I will say the feller don't play bad the Brahms Concerto," Kiskin remarked.

"Excuse me," Noblestone interrupted, "I'm not here to make no jokes, Mr. Kiskin."

"Them people ain't no jokes, Mr. Noblestone, and far from it!" Kiskin said. "If it wouldn't be that I am sending my aunt and cousin every month thirty dollars, I would have anyhow eighteen hundred instead of eight hundred dollars laid away."

Noblestone took the cup of coffee on his right hand and carefully oscillated its liquid contents, prior to inhaling it with a loud sucking noise.

"Then I'm sorry to say, Kiskin, that I couldn't do nothing for you," he said, and rose to his feet.

"Now wait a minute," Kiskin said. "You ain't heard it all what I've got to tell you."

Noblestone reseated himself and accepted coldly one of Kiskin's Havana seconds.

"I've got other clients, Kiskin," he said significantly.

"Sure I, know," Kiskin assured him, "and that's what I want to talk to you about. Might you would be acquainted with a party by the name Latz of Peikes and Latz in the wholesale paper and twine business?"

Noblestone stared hard at Kiskin.

"But them people ain't new beginners, Kiskin," he said. "They're an old established concern."

"Did I say they wasn't?" Kiskin said.

"Sam Latz must be an extremely wealthy man," Noblestone added, and he managed to endow the words *extremely wealthy* with such a liquid richness that he was obliged to wipe his mouth afterward with the back of his hand. "He owns quite a bunch of real estate, too."

"So his daughter told me," Kiskin said simply.

"His daughter!" Noblestone exclaimed.

"Selma Latz," Kiskin said. "Her and me are engaged to be married."

Noblestone took off his hat and laid it on the table as evidence that he was now in no hurry.

"You are engaged to Sam Latz's daughter and you didn't tell me this!" he cried. "Why, my dear young feller, what is the use you are monkeying with a fly-by-night concern like the Lady Marjory Waist Company when you are engaged to be married to Sam Latz's daughter?"

"Because," Kiskin replied, blushing brightly, "Sam Latz don't know it."

Noblestone resumed his hat. In fact he thrust it on his head so violently that by reason of its being a brand-new $1.50 derby, it made a clear tambourine-like sound.

"Sit down," Kiskin said, "and wait till I get through. Sam Latz don't know it, and whether he does know it or don't know it, y'understand, wouldn't make no difference to Selma and me. We would get married anyways."

Mr. Noblestone raised his right hand as though taking an oath.

"Excuse me," he said. "Your private love affairs don't concern me not in slightest, which I am the leaster of three houses from Sam Latz right now, and it's in my opinion, Kiskin, that you've got just so much chance of marrying his daughter as I have of getting the regular repairs of them houses to which I am entitled under the lease. Let me give you a tip, Kiskin. A man don't make two hundred thousand dollars in the paper and twine business by having a soft heart exactly. He's a tough proposition, Kiskin, and if you would excuse me, as I said before I've got other clients which is waiting for me at my office."

Kiskin rose and for the third time thrust Noblestone back into his chair.

"Let 'em wait," he said. "I ain't through yet."

He took from his head a wide-brimmed soft hat and passed his fingers through his wavy black hair.

"Look at me, Mr. Noblestone," he began. "I've got the face for a pianist—ain't it?"

Mr. Noblestone nodded grudgingly, for he could not but admit that Kiskin with his soft brown eyes, set far apart, his well-shaped nose and mouth and oval slender face, was a handsome artistic type.

"I've got a hand for a pianist, too," Kiskin continued, extending his right hand palm down on the table. It was a long, slender hand with tapering fingers, the nails well kept, and unconsciously Kiskin began to move those same fingers rapidly upon the polished surface of the table in the opening measures of Liszt's Liebestraum.

"So why did I give up being a pianist?" Kiskin asked Noblestone, who made an eloquent gesture with both hands and shoulders.

"My *tzuris* why you give up being a pianist!" the business broker exclaimed. "You are wasting my whole afternoon."

"To-morrow is another day," Kiskin replied. "I give up being a pianist not because I ain't just so much an artist as I ever was, Mr. Noblestone, anyhow in my soul, but because things don't break so good for artists which ain't got a pull, so I am now a business man, and a business man has got to push himself, otherwise he might just as well be an artist."

"A bookkeeper ain't a business man. A business man must got to be a boss for himself."

"Did I say he didn't?" Kiskin demanded. "Believe me, Mr. Noblestone, I know what a business man should ought to be, and I am being it—hard, pushing, a materialist, not an artist—and the first thing I made up my mind was that I should save my money, and the second thing was that I should marry a rich man's daughter—never mind if she would have a hump on her shoulder and one eye only."

"But Miss Latz is *umberufen* a very beautiful girl!" Noblestone protested, and once more Kiskin blushed.

"This is where I fell down on my plans," he admitted. "She *is* beautiful, Noblestone, and unless I could support her right, then I can't marry her."

"You couldn't marry her anyway," Noblestone said. "Latz wouldn't let you."

Kiskin snapped his fingers.

"For Latz I care this much!" he declared. "This afternoon yet I would only got to say the word and she goes down with me to the license bureau. She is crazy about me, but unless I can support her, then I can't marry her."

"Does she say this?" Noblestone asked.

"I told you before, Noblestone, *I* say this," Kiskin retorted. "I thought that as a business man I would be a materialist without a conscience, but this part of my conscience is something which I've got left over from being a pianist. I won't marry her till I can support her."

"But, *schlemiel*, if she wants to take a chance, why shouldn't you?" Noblestone cried. "She's *doch* the only child, ain't she?"

Kiskin nodded.

"He's a tough proposition, I admit," Noblestone went on, "but an only child is an only child!"

Kiskin shook his head.

"I couldn't take no favours from that *epikouros!*" he declared.

"*Epikouros!*"

"Philistine, then," Kiskin said. "Which in this respect also I thought I was a business man. Money I thought I could take from anybody,

Noblestone, but two years ago, when I was a pianist and not a bookkeeper, I played by that feller's silver wedding with a couple of fiddlers friends of mine for fifteen dollars the whole evening, and when we give them only the first movement of the Bach Double Concerto, he stops us and says we should practise at home. That's when I made up my mind to it that I would become a business man."

He wiped away a few beads of perspiration from his white forehead.

"And that's also when I met Selma," he concluded, "and if you would go to work and fix up this here partnership for me with the Lady Marjory Waist people, Noblestone, I would give you 10 per cent. of my first year's profits with a minimum of three hundred dollars one year from the date I sign the partnership agreement."

Noblestone folded his arms and his head began to nod satirically. "*Some* business man!" he exclaimed.

"Well, how could I pay you three hundred dollars commissions in advance if I've got to put up my eight hundred and twenty-six dollars as capital?" Kiskin protested. "Then I would have left only five hundred and twenty-six dollars, ain't it? And besides——"

"All right, all right," Noblestone broke in.

"If I've got to sit here and listen to any 'besides,' Kiskin, I'll never get to the office, so give me a few days and I think I could fix it for you with the Lady Marjory people."

Kiskin seized one of the business broker's hands and pressed it gratefully.

"Mr. Noblestone, what can I say?" he began.

"Don't say nothing," Noblestone cried. "Why I am doing this I don't know. I thought I was also a business man, but it must be that I am the same kind of a hard business man like you on account of playing once in a while 'cello."

"What!" Kiskin exclaimed. "You play 'cello and you never told me this? You and me and a fiddler must get together and run through some trios."

"Leave well enough alone," Noblestone said as he rose from the table and this time prepared definitely to leave. "If a hard business man like you ever heard me tackle so much as the easy movement of the Mendelssohn Trio even, you would never speak to me again so long as you live."

After Noblestone had left, Kiskin lingered at the table, for this was Saturday afternoon, a half holiday in the waist business, even though it was not even a breathing spell in the business brokerage profession. The Café Cosmopol was

far from crowded, however, because Saturday is a matinée day and the café's habitués were principally occupied with music, the theatre, and literature, in such forms as those professions are practised east of Third Avenue and south of Fourteenth Street.

It was at a particularly dull moment in the business of the afternoon that a tall, bulky figure entered the café and surveyed the tables for an acquaintance. He saw nobody—or, that is to say, nobody who was of consequence, since the visitor did not sit at *anybody's* table and smoke *anybody's* cigars. Nor did he drink coffee at *anybody's* expense. He picked and chose the people who paid for his refreshments, a privilege much sought after in the Café Cosmopol, for the visitor was no other than Sergei Goldenweiser the impresario and concert manager, and he held himself in such esteem that rather than associate with ordinary people, he would at a pinch pay for his coffee himself.

"How do you do, Mr. Goldenweiser," Kiskin said without rising from his table. As a business man who was no longer a pianist, he saw no point in being especially polite to an impresario.

Goldenweiser nodded in a lofty fashion and continued his survey of the tables, but as there seemed to be no other person who had the cour-

age to salute him, he sat down at Kiskin's table. "I ain't seen you for a long time," he said, although he had no idea where he had seen Kiskin before or what his name was.

"I quit music sometime ago already," said Kiskin, "and," he added with a slight access of colour, "I am now a manufacturer of ladies' waists."

"You don't tell me," Goldenweiser said. After all, the man had been a musician even though he was now in trade. Goldenweiser's manner became slightly mollified.

"You was a fiddler, wasn't it?" the impresario inquired.

"My cousin Jacob Kiskin is the fiddler," George explained. "I used to was a pianist."

Goldenweiser slapped the table with his open hand.

"Well, if it ain t a funny quincidence!" he exclaimed. "The whole world is one town, ain't it?"

"Maybe!" Kiskin said.

"What do you mean—maybe?" cried Goldenweiser. "Not six weeks ago I was sitting with Jacob Kiskin like I am sitting with you now—in the Krasnopolsky Restaurant in Moscow."

"You seen Jacob in Moscow!" Kiskin interrupted.

"I am back in New York only three weeks," Goldenweiser continued, "and the last words Jacob Kiskin says to me was if I see his cousin in New York I should tell him that they got the money he sent them and they would pay back every penny."

"Yow! They would pay back every penny!" Kiskin exclaimed.

"You think not?" Goldenweiser said. "Well, let me tell you something, Kiskin. I am already a hard-boiled egg by fiddlers. Every rotten Toscha, Jascha, Mischa, and Sascha which made a hit in this country, I discovered them on the other side first, and most of them I brought over here already, and *I tell you*—I, Sergei Goldenweiser—that your cousin Jacob Kiskin has got all of them Toschas, Jaschas, Mischas, and Saschas looking like shoemakers."

He spread his right hand on his broad chest and patted himself vigorously while making this pronouncement, so that Kiskin could not help noticing a large yellow diamond which flashed on the impresario's third finger.

"Well, why don't you also bring Jacob over here, then?" Kiskin asked.

"*I* bring him over!" Goldenweiser cried. "What am I? A rich waist manufacturer? It costs not only time but money to get away from

Russland nowadays, and Jacob Kiskin has got *doch* a mother, too."

Kiskin laid his hand on the impresario's arm. "Tell me, how are they getting along?"

"*Schlecht!* The old lady ain't nothing but skin and bone, and Jacob looks already a consumptive."

"But I send them always thirty dollars a month," Kiskin protested.

"Thirty dollars a month to two people in Russland nowadays ain't a drop in the bucket. It keeps them only sufficiently alive so that they could go on suffering, whereas, Kiskin, if you would *schenck* 'em their passage over here and send 'em enough money to pay for *schmiering* them Bolshevik officials, Kiskin, their troubles would be over."

Kiskin drummed with his fingers on the table and said nothing.

"What a tone that boy has got!" continued Goldenweiser. "Like gold!"

Kiskin cleared his throat. "Do you think he would make good over here?"

"That is a gamble," Goldenweiser replied, "but it's a gamble which a rich waist manufacturer could easy afford to make."

The rich waist manufacturer—rich at least in aspiration—gulped convulsively.

"How much do you think it would cost?"

"Well," Goldenweiser said, "I couldn't tell you exactly, but I should say offhand that eight hundred dollars would cover everything."

Kiskin broke into a profuse perspiration and drummed again on the table top with the fingers of his right hand. It was an emphatic slow drumming, and an expert in such matters might have recognized the rhythm as that of Chopin's "*Marche Funèbre*."

"In fact," Goldenweiser concluded, "if you would give me a check for eight hundred dollars, I would guarantee to land Jacob Kiskin and his mother in New York as an artist with a contract to play under my management. This does away with all trouble under the immigration laws, whereas if you yourself was to try it, maybe he would be sent back and you would have all the expense for nothing. Here is my card, and if you want to get your cousin Jacob and his mother over here, all you've got to do is to mail me a check for eight hundred, and I'll attend to the rest."

Nor did Goldenweiser linger at Kiskin's table after handing him the card, for the impresario noticed at the other end of the café another table at which was seated a prosperous clothing merchant whose daughter had aspirations to become

a prima donna, and all such parents Goldenweiser considered to be his lawful prey. They were in the nature of automatic machines dispensing coffee and cigars upon the insertion of a modicum of praise for their daughters' talents, so that as he walked across the room Goldenweiser threw away almost unlighted the Havana second which he had extracted from Kiskin, confident that he could replace it with a Havana first.

As for Kiskin, he gazed for more than half an hour into vacancy, or at any rate into comparative vacancy, for every space at which he looked seemed to be slightly misted over, except that it contained the figures 800 and sometimes 826.

His mind was still whirling in misty figures of eight and eight hundred when at five o'clock Miss Selma Latz walked into the Café Cosmopol and made George Kiskin's table the point toward which all the moist or fishy eyes of the waiters were directed, since in describing Miss Latz as a very beautiful girl *umberufen*, Noblestone had not at all overstated the case.

"Well, George," she cried, hardly waiting to clasp his hand, "did you see him?"

Her eyes were shining with excitement. They usually shone anyway, but now her whole face was so illuminated by an eager curiosity that

the adjective *beautiful* even intensified by the adverb *very* might have been considered moderately libellous.

"Yes, I seen him," George said, and at the hollowness of his tones the eagerness faded from Selma's eyes.

"And he said he couldn't do it?"

"Why should he say he couldn't do it?"

"Then why do you look like this?" Selma asked. "You're not sick, are you?"

George passed one slender hand over his damp forehead and gazed miserably at Selma.

"Listen, *leben*," he said, "if you and me couldn't get married for another year, would you be awful disappointed?"

There was no need for Selma to answer. Her eyes filled with tears and her lower lip began to tremble, so that in front of two envious waiters, George was obliged to lift her gloved hand to his lips and cover it with kisses.

"What are you worrying?" he said hastily. "Did I say we wouldn't be?"

"Then why do you talk this way?"

George made a flapping gesture to reassure her. "Say! I didn't get exactly a written guarantee from Noblestone that he would fix things for me," he said, "and also you've got to figure that eight hundred and twenty-six dollars don't

go such, excuse me, a helluva long ways." He put his arm around her quite shamelessly. "But don't worry, Selma *leben*," he concluded. "I feel it in my bones that Noblestone will come to me on Monday morning with the whole thing settled."

Thus for the remainder of the evening Selma and George abandoned themselves to the more reasonably priced diversions of an economical neighbourhood, which included a splendid fifty-cent regular dinner in an Avenue A restaurant, followed by a second-run moving-picture show, and the whole concluding with a window shopping tour on Avenue B. There until midnight the furniture stores display for just such couples as Selma and George the entire contents of a four-room apartment in complete detail.

Nothing is lacking to induce the engaged couple immediately to enter and arrange the liberal terms of payment which the price card in the middle of the show window assures the holder will be adjusted to suit any pocketbook.

"Promise me," Selma said as they looked at their last window prior to taking the subway up-town, "that no matter what happens, we won't put it off longer than next month."

They were standing opposite an expanse of

plate glass which was the fourth wall of a dining room furnished in a modified Jacobean, with just a dash of Louis-Seize and Chippendale, except the lamps, which showed a strong Italian influence. By the soft light of those elaborate lamps, Kiskin could see himself reading the paper while Selma hastened from the kitchen bearing dishes of succulent economical food. He knew that she had preserved all the notebooks from her domestic science course in the Washington Irving High School, and there on the sidewalk he could almost smell something with onions in it from the menu of a dinner declared by the teacher to be ample for a family of two at a total cost of forty-eight cents.

"Make it three months," he said, "and I promise."

They moved up two stores to the entrance of a paint and colour establishment which closed with all lights out at ten promptly, and there they sealed that promise with a kiss and resealed it with several more, so that when he finally reached his furnished room on Fourth Street at a few minutes past midnight, he had made up his mind that he could not sacrifice his own career as a prospectively wealthy waist manufacturer to that of his cousin Jacob as a talented violinist. He persisted in this resolution until

he entered the Café Cosmopol the following morning for a frugal breakfast of one cup of coffee and a cigarette, where he found the impresario Goldenweiser sitting at a table with another man, and strangely enough Goldenweiser was ordering.

"Kiskin," he said, "come here a moment."

He pulled out a chair and George sat down.

"This gentleman is a party by the name of Prokhorov," he said, "and he arrived from Russland only yesterday."

Kiskin shook hands with the newcomer, who seemed unduly depressed even for a newly arrived immigrant.

"He is going into the import and export business under the name Proctor," said Goldenweiser, "and he saw your cousin Jacob not three weeks ago."

"I regret very much to say," Prokhorov added in excellent English.

"He means," Goldenweiser explained, "he's got some bad news for you. Your poor aunt, *olav hasholom*, ain't been so well."

Kiskin clasped his hands convulsively.

"*Gott in der Welt!*" he exclaimed, for by the use of the phrase *olav hasholom*, which is literally *peace be upon her*, Goldenweiser had meant only one thing. "When did this happen?"

"The day before I left was the funeral," Prokhorov said, "and Jacob himself is very, very ill. Mr. Kiskin, for God's sake, send him the money he should come over here. A fine talent like that to die miserably in that terrible place! Like cattle they were living, and you a rich man."

"For six hundred dollars," Goldenweiser cried, "would you see your poor cousin perish like this?"

"Six hundred dollars!" Kiskin repeated.

"It can be done for six hundred," Prokhorov said.

"And what is six hundred to you?" asked Goldenweiser, and Kiskin made no reply. Instead, he drummed with his fingers on the top of the table the well-known motif from Siegfried's Trauermarsch, including the two melancholy tympani notes, than which a more funereal melody has never been written.

"What are you hesitating?" Goldenweiser said imploringly. "It is *doch* a matter of life and death. Give me to-day a check for six hundred dollars and in four weeks at the outside Jacob will be in New York."

"I ain't got a check-book with me," Kiskin protested in a weak whisper.

"What of it!" Goldenweiser cried, and searched

in his breast pocket. "Here is my check-book. Cross out the name of my bank and put in yours. *Nu! Nu! Schreib!* While there is still time to save his life. Go ahead!"

And George went ahead. He crossed out the name of Goldenweiser's bank where at that precise moment Goldenweiser was overdrawn to the extent of three dollars and twenty-five cents, and inserted the name of the Dry Dock Bank, in which reposed Kiskin's balance of $826. A minute later that balance had been reduced to $226 and George sat alone at the table, for Goldenweiser and Prokhorov immediately departed to arrange the details of Jacob Kiskin's journey.

As they passed out of the door, they almost collided with Harris Noblestone, who was also accustomed to breakfast off a cup of coffee and a cigarette at the Café Cosmopol, and when he caught sight of Kiskin, whose pale face rested on one slender hand in an attitude of utter dejection, he hastened to his table.

"*Nu*, Kiskin," he cried, "I congradulate you."

"You congradulate me!" Kiskin groaned.

"Sure!" Noblestone said. "It went quicker than I expected. Last night already I seen the Lady Marjory waist people, and they agree that they would give you a 10 per cent. interest, pro-

viding you give all your time and attention to the business, keep the books, and invest eight hundred and twenty-six dollars."

Kiskin gazed mournfully at the business broker. "Would they maybe give me a 10 per cent. interest if I give all my time and attention to the business and invested only two hundred and twenty-six dollars?"

"What are they—*meshuggeh?*" Noblestone exclaimed, and Kiskin made a most eloquent gesture with both hands.

"Then the whole thing is off," he declared.

"What do you mean—the whole thing is off?" Noblestone demanded. "Didn't you tell me only yesterday afternoon you had eight hundred and twenty-six dollars in the Dry Dock Bank?"

"Yesterday afternoon I did have it," George admitted, "but six hundred dollars of it I ain't got no longer."

"You ain't got it no longer!" Noblestone almost shrieked. "What did you done with it? Gambled it?"

Kiskin nodded. "Yes," he said simply. "I gambled it."

Noblestone rose from the table and the entire café rang with the impact of his derby hat as he slammed it on his head.

"A bookkeeper you are," he declared, "and a

bookkeeper you will remain, and as for me, Kiskin, don't never ask me to do you a favour again so long as you live. Murderer! You should ought to be in jail right now."

However, Noblestone's prediction as to George remaining a bookkeeper was not entirely fulfilled, since on Monday morning early, when Mr. Berelman, president of the Berelman Waist Company, arrived at his place of business, he did not wait to examine his mail for checks, orders, or cancellations before ending Kiskin's career as a bookkeeper in the offices of the Berelman Waist Company at least. On his way downtown in the subway, Berelman had by an unfortunate coincidence sat next to the president of the Lady Marjory Waist Company, who in his disappointment at not receiving an access of $826 to his working capital, had taken the opportunity of informing Berelman that his bookkeeper was not only a gambler and a four-flusher, but was also a snake in the grass which bites the hand that feeds it.

Moreover, on Monday night George had a somewhat painful interview with Miss Selma Latz. Although still a business man in aspiration, his pianistic conscience had impelled him to make a clean breast of the entire affair, with the result that on Tuesday morning Kiskin

was out of all of his engagements, business and otherwise, and he was now free to pursue his old calling of pianist, untrammelled by the necessity of attending Mr. Berelman at eight o'clock every morning and Miss Selma Latz at eight o'clock every evening. It is true that on Tuesday morning, before seven o'clock, Miss Latz in a prompt repentance had awakened by telephone the drug clerk on the nearest corner to George's furnished room, for George had no telephone of his own, but the drug clerk had refused in terms not usually countenanced by the telephone company to send for George and had remained firm in his refusal in spite of the pitifully tearful tones in which Selma's request was made.

Nor did she have a personal interview with George when she arrived, an hour later, at the furnished-room house where George lived, for all Monday night and early Tuesday morning George had taken stock of his finances and had decided that six dollars a week was too much to pay for a furnished room. Consequently, by seven o'clock Tuesday morning he was occupying a four-dollar-a-week room on Third Street and had left no forwarding address.

Miss Latz was obliged to apply to the only person who might know of George's whereabouts. She accordingly hastened to the office

of Harris Noblestone, the business broker, who occupied a small store on Eldridge Street.

"Where is he?" Selma cried.

"Where is who?" Noblestone asked.

"George Kiskin," Selma sobbed. "He's moved away and he hasn't left any address."

"Ain't he at work by Berelman's waist factory?" Noblestone asked.

Selma broke down completely and burying her face in her handkerchief, shook her head.

"He's been f-f-ired," she wailed, "and I've done this to him."

"Done what?" Noblestone inquired.

"I t-told him I n-never wanted to see him again," Miss Latz sobbed.

"Say!" Noblestone declared, flipping one hand, "you ain't got nothing on me, and I think you're dead right, too. It's time you come to your senses. What prospects has such a young feller got—a loafer like that?"

"He isn't a loafer," Miss Latz cried.

"Ain't he?" Noblestone said. "Well, what do you call a man which he gambles away six hundred dollars in one day?"

"He didn't gamble it away," Selma insisted, and therewith told Noblestone what Kiskin had done with the six hundred dollars. "And I told him that he had chosen between his cousin

and me, and I never wanted to see him again," she wailed, "and now he's committed suicide or something."

"Yow! He's committed suicide!" Noblestone said. "He's still got anyhow two hundred and twenty-six dollars in the bank, and people with two hundred and twenty-six dollars don't commit suicide." He patted her reassuringly on the shoulder. "He'll probably show up in the Café Cosmopol to-night as usual, and when he does, I'll phone you and see what we can do."

But George failed to appear at the Café Cosmopol either that evening or any other evening for a period of nearly four weeks, and as neither Noblestone nor Selma knew of Goldenweiser's connection with the projected immigration of Jacob Kiskin, they lost all trace of George. However, he kept in touch with Goldenweiser, and precisely four weeks from the time that he had parted with his six hundred dollars, Goldenweiser notified him that on the following Wednesday, agreeable to the provisions of the United States Immigration Laws, Jacob Kiskin would land in Hoboken, as a first-class passenger of the Baltic Liner *Iridium*.

Consequently on Wednesday morning at eight o'clock he met Goldenweiser and Prokhorov at the pier. He had not benefited by his four

weeks' holiday, and Goldenweiser immediately commented on his appearance.

"What's the matter, Mr. Kiskin?" he said. "Have you been sick or something?"

"I feel all right," George replied.

"Well, you don't look it," Goldenweiser continued, "which the trouble with you big business men is that you don't take it easy enough. I suppose the waist business has been too good lately, and you've worked your head off."

Here was an opportunity for George to have put himself straight with Goldenweiser—an opportunity which eluded him, however, for before he could say that he was out of the waist business and that his pallor was due to indoor exercise at the piano in preparation for his cousin's arrival, Prokhorov interrupted him.

"Always the almighty dollar!" Prokhorov remarked. "Tell me, Mr. Kiskin, what good will all your money do you if you lose your health?"

"Say!" Goldenweiser broke in, "a man like Mr. Kiskin is under heavy expense, Prokhorov. This ain't Russland in the old days, where the gold ruble went as far as the dollar does over here —further even. I can remember when the Mariinski Theatre itself could be hired for a hundred rubles on an off night, but you take Carnegie Hall for example, and what do they ask there

for one matinée recital outside the regular concert season even?"

If this had been anything but a rhetorical question, George would not have been able to answer it anyway. He was too busy composing a speech which would once and for all divest him of the rôle of wealthy manufacturer, but before he could even clear his throat, Goldenweiser had headed him off.

"You would think that the Carnegie Hall people figured on virtuosi having rich relations which could foot the bill," Goldenweiser continued, "and then there is the newspaper advertising, and the cost of exploiting the artist and everything. When I put over Toscha Berkenheim, Mr. Kiskin, would you believe that for a luncheon I gave to only three critics, it cost Berkenheim's uncle, a clothing manufacturer by the name Berkley, over ninety-seven dollars and fifty cents?"

Kiskin made a noise in his larynx which might have been construed as either "You don't say so!" or "Is that a fact?" and the more Goldenweiser dwelt on the expense of promoting a violinist in America, the hoarser George became, so that up to the time the *Iridium* was being warped into her dock, he had still failed to deliver the important speech which would have set

him free from the burden of his imaginary wealth. It was, of course, impossible to interrupt Goldenweiser with the necessary confession and avoidance after the boat had approached the dock close enough for passengers on board to recognize those who were waiting to greet them, since Goldenweiser utilized such occasions as these for his own personal publicity to the exclusion of all other interests.

He had indeed carefully dressed the part of an important impresario greeting a virtuoso, and while it was an exceptionally mild day for mid-April, he wore what to anybody not actually an expert in the matter of dyed rabbit skin would have appeared to be an expensive fur overcoat. Nor did he trust his bushy gray hair, flowing Windsor tie, and huge black moustache to distinguish his bulky figure from several other bulky figures on the dock. He supplemented these adornments by waving a broad-brimmed soft felt hat in one hand and a gold-headed cane in the other, and bawled loud salutations in Russian, to the effect that America welcomed Jascha Kiskin, the greatest violin virtuoso since Paganini. Occasionally he varied this greeting by substituting *New York* for *America* and *Ole Bull* for *Paganini*, but he never once mentioned Kreisler and Zimbalist. He didn't propose to

make himself hoarse mentioning living competitors such as these, when Ole Bull and Paganini were just as famous and a whole lot more dead.

At last Goldenweiser was obliged to desist, not only for lack of breath, but principally because the formalities imposed by the United States Immigration Laws take up time, and obviously one cannot keep up a full head of enthusiastic steam for three hours, which was the period consumed in examining the first-class passengers of the *Iridium*. Had Jacob Kiskin been a second-class or steerage pasenger this examination would have been conducted on Ellis Island, and the manner in which he travelled would have been *prima facie* evidence that he was not a visiting artist but an arriving immigrant, and as such, merely one of the Russian quota for the month. But even the fact that Jacob had arrived first-class did not satisfy the inspector in charge, and at thè end of three hours Goldenweiser, Kiskin, and Prokhorov were summoned on board to supplement Jacob's statement that he was under engagement to appear as a concert violinist, for not only was the inspector in charge skeptical by experience but he was also unsympathetic by disposition. He was not at all affected by the hysterical reception which George and Goldenweiser accorded the virtuoso.

"Hey! Break away there and give the guy air, will you!" he cried after five minutes of tearful embraces between George and Jacob, Goldenweiser and Jacob, and even a few less tearful accolades bestowed by Prokhorov.

"Now, which is the cousin?" the inspector asked.

"I am," George said.

"Is that so?" the inspector remarked. "You don't look much better fed than he does."

And it must be confessed that even as Jacob with his gaunt face, little fair moustache, and dank, long, fair hair looked far from being a successful virtuoso, George after many sleepless nights, much worrying about the loss of his job and his fiancée, and four weeks of ceaseless practise on the piano, did not appear to be a typical wealthy manufacturer, for such had he been represented to be by Jacob during the course of the inspector's three-hour-long examination.

"And you are a rich waist manufacturer!" the inspector said in the tones usually associated with the phrase *So this is London!*

"That's what he is," Goldenweiser declared.

"I'm asking him, not you," the inspector barked.

"Say! Say!" Goldenweiser shouted back. "No one is deaf here. This gentleman ain't

exactly boasting that he is rich, but if you want to know how rich he is, I can tell you right now that he is underwriting this artist's concert tour of the United States, beginning with Carnegie Hall, and taking him all over the Pacific Coast and even Mexico yet."

If it had been possible for George to have turned a shade paler, he would have done so.

"I am?" he gasped.

"Sure you are," Goldenweiser said. "Tomorrow night yet I have invited the critics of six New York newspapers to a dinner at the Ritz to welcome this great virtuoso, and——"

But Goldenweiser could get no further with his projected exploitation of Jacob Kiskin, for this announcement had been too much for George, and he fell prone on the floor in a fainting spell that lasted twenty minutes. Ten minutes after he had been revived, his cousin Jacob was on his way to Ellis Island, there to await further examination by a board of inquiry, Goldenweiser and Prokhorov had departed in disillusioned rage, and George himself was just able to totter to the Hudson tube.

In the meantime an occurrence of vastly more importance to George Kiskin and his temporarily abandoned career as a business man was transpiring in the office of Harris Noblestone on

Eldridge Street. It was no less than a visit to Noblestone's establishment by Sam Latz himself at nine o'clock on Wednesday morning.

"Yes, Noblestone, that's the way it goes!" Sam said. "You make every sacrifice to bring up a child and give her a splendid education in the Washington Irving High School and everything, and just so soon as she gradjawates, she turns on her father like a serpent's tooth and wants to marry a bookkeeper yet."

"He ain't even a bookkeeper now," Noblestone said.

"I know it, but what can I do with the girl losing fifteen pounds in four weeks?" Sam asked.

"Love is a funny thing," Noblestone observed. "I see lots of matches busted up where the feller was a rich manufacturer already, and the girl *oser* lost two ounces, but just so soon as it's a *schnorrer* like Kiskin, then the girl wastes away on you."

"I bet yer!" Latz agreed. "So this is what I want you to do, Noblestone—see them Lady Marjory waist people, and if they are still in the same mind, don't mention my name in the matter, but tell them you will see that Kiskin puts up eight hundred dollars for the 10 per cent. partnership."

"But why don't you see them Lady Marjory

people yourself, Mr. Latz?" Noblestone protested, and Latz glared at him furiously.

"What am I—crazy?" he demanded. "In my position the least them Lady Marjory people would ask of me would be ten thousand dollars. Ain't it enough that a merchant like me should get stuck with a musical bookkeeper for a son-in-law? Must I got to spot up a dowry like he would be a banker already?"

Noblestone nodded. "I guess you're right; so I'll look up them Lady Marjory people this morning yet and see what I could do."

"And if they're agreeable, I will give you the eight hundred dollars and you can fix the whole thing up," Sam added, but Noblestone raised one hand as though stopping the traffic.

"One moment, Mr. Latz," he said. "I ain't making up partnerships as a hobby exactly. Once already I got them Lady Marjory people to agree to the terms, and the eight hundred wasn't produced."

"Don't you trust me?" Latz asked.

"It ain't a question of trusting," Noblestone declared. "Pay me first my commission and give me in hand a check for eight hundred dollars, because I ain't going to them people with no more false alarms."

"But we don't even know where the boy is at all!" Latz protested.

"That's all right," Noblestone said. "I'll guarantee to find the boy if I get my commission. In fact, Mr. Latz, you can make out the eight-hundred-dollar check to the order of George Kiskin, and if the boy ain't found, then the check wouldn't be used."

And thus when George Kiskin entered the Café Cosmopol after his distressing experience on board the *Iridium*, he was once more potentially a wealthy waist manufacturer, although as he was not yet aware of it he did not indulge himself in the regular thirty-five cent table d'hôte, but ate for his luncheon a ten-cent rye bread Swiss cheese sandwich and a glass of near-beer. He was just finishing this frugal meal when Noblestone approached him.

"*Nu*, Kiskin," he began, "where was you all this last month?"

A dangerous glint appeared in Kiskin's hollow eyes. As an exponent of patient merit, he was about fed up in the matter of taking spurns from the unworthy.

"How does this concern you?" he asked.

"Say, listen!" Noblestone cried, flipping his fingers under Kiskin's nose. "Don't ride no

high horses with me, Kiskin! You played me one dirty trick, and this is your last chance. Do you or don't you want to go as partners together with the Lady Marjory waist people?"

Kiskin laughed aloud unpleasantly.

"A fine show I've got to go as partners together with anybody, Noblestone," he exclaimed. "Not ten minutes ago I paid a lawyer a hundred dollars he should try to get my cousin Jacob off of Ellis Island, another hundred I've spent in the last month for piano hire and room rent, with a little food also, because even a canary must eat, let alone a pianist, and to-day yet I've got in the bank twenty-two dollars and fifty cents."

"How much you've got in the bank don't interest me, Kiskin," Noblestone said. "Give a look at this once."

He handed Kiskin Sam Latz's check for eight hundred dollars, drawn to the order of George Kiskin, and then sat back to watch the effect. A faint flush mantled to George's cheeks.

"Now listen to me, Kiskin," Noblestone said earnestly. "You should forget all this foolishness—pianos, cousins, and practising—and you should be a business man, not an artist."

"Couldn't a business man be also an artist?" Kiskin asked.

"Not with this money he couldn't," Noblestone said, re-pocketing the check. "Which this check you would endorse over to the Lady Marjory people in my presence, Kiskin, and as I said before, this is your last chance."

"Say, looky here, Noblestone," Kiskin retorted, "you are so free with handing me last chances, let me hand you your first chance."

"My first chance!" Noblestone repeated.

"Your first chance to make some real big money," Kiskin said. He leaned across the table and laid an emphatic forefinger on Noblestone's sleeve. "Supposing, Noblestone, someone would have offered you a 25 per cent. interest in the first five years of concerts which Jascha Heifetz gave, y'understand, how much money do you suppose you'd have to-day?"

"Not a nickel," Noblestone replied promptly. "because I wouldn't have took up such an offer."

"Why not?" Kiskin said. "You *doch* play a little the 'cello and you know a good fiddler when you hear one, don't you?"

"Sure!" Noblestone agreed, "but I know a damsite better a good waist business when I see one."

Kiskin laid his slender hand on his chest in the vicinity of where he formerly kept his Havana seconds and looked so earnestly at Noble-

stone that he almost made an impression upon him.

"Noblestone," he said, "I honestly and truly believe in my heart that my cousin Jacob if he gets just one chance by Carnegie Hall would make such a sensation that Heifetz and Zimbalist and all them fellers would look like they had only one arm beside him."

During this impassioned plea Kiskin had not noticed that the table behind him had become occupied by a tall black-moustached person in a fur-lined overcoat who, as a waiter approached the table, waved him away with a gold-headed cane.

"And you would not got to invest your own money even, Noblestone," Kiskin said. "It's my eight hundred dollars which I am giving you."

The man at the next table took off his broad-brimmed hat and fanned himself vigorously, while Noblestone hesitated for a moment, but as soon as Noblestone began to speak Goldenweiser ceased fanning himself. He was not going to miss a word of this.

"It is your eight hundred, I admit," Noblestone said, "but——"

Here he hesitated again, and therefore George never heard what followed the *but*, because Gol-

denweiser leaped to his feet and flung his hat down on the table in a puddle of stale coffee.

"Faker!" he yelled, confronting Kiskin. "You are holding out on me."

"Excuse *me*," Noblestone said with his favourite north and south bound traffic gesture, "this is a private conversation."

"Private yourself!" Goldenweiser retorted. "This swindler told me not two hours ago on the steamer that he had just one hundred and twenty-six dollars to his name, and now he is offering you eight hundred that you should arrange an appearance for my artist!"

"Now listen, my friend," Noblestone said conciliatingly, "you've got the wrong idea about me."

"Have I?" Goldenweiser said. "I know a sneak-thief when I see one, which if you think you can steal away Jacob Kiskin from under my nose, you're kidding yourself into a law-suit, that's all."

"Say! Say!" Kiskin said. "Whose cousin is Jacob Kiskin, anyway?"

"Keep out of this, will you!" Goldenweiser shouted.

"Keep out nothing!" Kiskin said firmly. "I brought Jacob over here with my money and I have picked out Mr. Noblestone to manage his concert tour."

"You've picked me out!" Noblestone exclaimed.

"Sure I have," Kiskin replied. "This afternoon yet we would go before this here board of inquiry and show them black on white that we have hired Carnegie Hall for a month from tonight. I myself will play the accompaniments and the paper will be up in a couple days yet."

Here in his excitement Goldenweiser made a prime tactical error. Had he restrained himself for another second Noblestone was about to disclaim the slightest interest in Jacob Kiskin, his talent or his future, but Goldenweiser prevented him by a loud explosion of mixed Russian, Yiddish, and English profanity.

"Hire Carnegie Hall! Put up your paper! Practise your accompaniments! What do I care?" he bellowed. "I will get me the biggest and best lawyer in this country."

At this juncture the head waiter forced his way through the throng of interested spectators which now surrounded Kiskin's table and laid a restraining hand on Goldenweiser's shoulder.

"Mr. Goldenweiser! Mr. Goldenweiser!" he said. "You are all excited."

"I've got a right to be exicted," Goldenweiser cried. "My whole life I have devoted to music! Genius after genius I discovered, and now when

I have found an unknown artist of the highest rank, a second Paganini *doch*, he is copped out on me by this here Epikouros."

"Epikouros!" Noblestone exclaimed.

"That's what I said—Epikouros!" Goldenweiser repeated. "What do you know about music?"

Noblestone grew pale with rage. To call a man an epicurean or Philistine is insult enough, but to accuse him in a centre of East Side culture such as the Café Cosmopol of knowing nothing about music, is in effect to utter a fighting word.

"That'll do, Mr. Goldenweiser!" he said. "Maybe I don't know a genius when I see one, but I anyhow studied 'cello three years in Gomel by Pikkel who learned from Feysmann the big Petrograd 'cellist, which I never intended in the slightest to interfere with your graft, Goldenweiser, but you've insulted me into it." He put his hand into his breast pocket and took out the eight-hundred-dollar check. "Here, Kiskin," he said, "deposit this in your bank and *schenck* your cousin to this concert."

He banged his derby hat on his head and turned to Goldenweiser with a final glare.

"And if you're looking for trouble, Mr. Goldenweiser," he concluded, "let me tell you that I may be awful dumb about geniuses, but

I'm A number one on picking out good lawyers, and don't you forget it."

Six months later, Max Berelman of the Berelman Waist Company, sat in his private office making figures on the back of an old envelope. Business had been none too good with Max lately. Several customers in Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Rochester had fallen away from him and he was further worried by the necessity for meeting loans at his bank. He was in the midst of this disagreeable task when the door opened to admit a young man of a slightly florid complexion. His hair was brown and wavy but well barbered nevertheless, and his plump figure filled out clothes of an extremely fashionable cut.

"Good-morning, Mr. Berelman," he said. "I guess you don't remember me, ain't it?"

"Your face ain't so familiar," Mr. Berelman said, "and to tell you the truth I ain't got exactly a wonderful memory for names."

"That's a good thing in a way," the visitor said, "because you shouldn't start out by getting mad at me, and you would if you remembered my name. So I'll begin by saying that a friend of mine by the name Noblestone told me you could use a partner with a little money—say fifty thousand dollars or so."

"I don't say I couldn't," Berelman admitted, "in especially if he knows the waist business."

"Well, I've got the fifty thousand dollars," the visitor said, "and I understand the waist business, and in particular your waist business."

"My waist business!" Berelman exclaimed. "Why, then you must be this here—now, who's-this."

The visitor nodded.

"George Kiskin," he said, "and I've had a lot of luck lately. You've heard of Jacob Kiskin the big new violinist?"

"Who hasn't?" Berelman asked.

"Well I've had a 50 per cent. interest in his tour. He's my cousin and I've also been playing his accompaniments making all the big towns to the Pacific Coast."

"And why do you now want to go back into the waist business?" Berelman asked.

"Well, you see, it's like this," George said. "Five months ago I got married to Miss Selma Latz, the father is Peikes and Latz in the paper and twine business." Here George's florid complexion grew a trifle more florid. "And," he concluded, "she don't feel that she should ought to be travelling around the way she has been any longer."

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

HERE!" B. Podolnik said, grasping the lapels of his coat and spreading them apart as though expanding his breast to the foeman's bayonet. "Take my blood! Take my life! What do you want from me?"

It was only half-past eleven; and in Podolnik's Vienna Restaurant and Café the snowy napery, which was as snowy as snow in Union Square the day after the snowstorm, remained unsullied except for a solitary diner, who paid no attention to the proprietor's dramatic outburst. Instead, he applied himself so assiduously to his soup and remained so ostentatiously disinterested that Morris Zadkin, to whom Podolnik's remarks were addressed, continued the conversation in what to the solitary diner seemed a wholly unnecessary pianissimo.

"I don't want your blood and I don't want your life," Zadkin said. "All I want is that, beginning next month, you pay me twenty dollars more a month rent, Podolnik. The place is worth it, Podolnik; and if you won't pay it I

could quick lease my store to another leaster, which would."

Though in his lighter moments the lines of Morris Zadkin's face could soften into a suggestion of Field Marshal von Hindenburg, ordinarily they resembled the framed mechanism on the door of a safe-deposit vault, symbolizing not only strength but the utter futility of trying to get money from such a well-guarded interior; and it was apparent to B. Podolnik that further argument would be fruitless.

"All right, Mr. Zadkin," he said; "go ahead and find a new leaster, and if you wouldn't be compelled to hand him a dispossess at the end of the second month he must got to be running here a joint, because no legitimate restaurant business could stand it paying more as one hundred dollars a month in a hole like this."

Zadkin rose stiffly to his feet and said: "*Sdètzo!*" Which, as you may learn from any American war correspondent who has returned from the Russian front, with a rich Slavonic vocabulary comprising not only *nitchyvo* but also *da*, is a Russian-American interjection implying scorn, anger, or contempt; and in fact it is the equivalent of the English phrase "Is that so!"

"*Sdètzo!*" Zadkin repeated. "Well, let me tell you one thing, Podolnik: You have been

my leaster here for a long time, and if I wouldn't thought a whole lot of you, Podolnik, I would never of gave your wife's nephew, Louis Dworkin, a job in my place at all. But now that you are passing such insulting remarks to me, Podolnik, I wouldn't show you no mercy at all. The first of next month you move from here, even if you was to offer me two hundred dollars a month rent."

"What a chance!" Podolnik exclaimed. "A hundred dollars and two cents I wouldn't give you!"

"And, furthermore, you could tell your wife she should find her nephew a job somewheres else!" Zadkin shouted. "I am through with your whole *Mishbocha*, Podolnik."

"Say," Podolnik declared, "if Louis couldn't find a better job as bookkeeper in a jam and pickle factory, Mr. Zadkin, I am sorry for him. Also, if you think it is a pleasure to me to got my wife's relations smelling up my house *mit* vinegar, Mr. Zadkin, you're very much mistaken. And even if I would only got a couple more weeks to stay here, Zadkin, I got a little consideration for my customers." He pointed his remarks with several loud sniffs, and Zadkin placed his hat firmly on his head with both hands, while he searched his mind for a sufficiently crushing re-

joinder. But the restaurant proprietor forestalled him.

"Max," Podolnik shouted to a waiter who was removing the solitary customer's soup, "open all the transoms; the whole place reeks like the devil from pickles!"

For more than five minutes after Zadkin had departed, Podolnik paced up and down the floor, and at intervals his eyes roved in the direction of his only customer, who, however, paid no attention to Podolnik, but continued to make noisy inroads into a dish of *gefüllte rinderbrust mit farfel.* He knew that the surest way to receive a confidence is not to invite it, and he was not disappointed, for Podolnik suddenly ceased his exercise and sat down heavily at an adjoining table.

"Yes, Mr. —er—er——"

"Noblestone—excuse me, I couldn't remember the names of every *Schlemiel* what comes in the place; but that's the way it goes," Podolnik continued. "For five years I am running here a first-class restaurant, and I just managed to keep my nose out of water, y'understand; and now, when things begins to look like they was going to break a little better for me, y'understand, that *Rosher* goes to work and raises the rent on me twenty dollars a month."

Mr. Noblestone wagged his head from side to side, and made incoherent sounds through his nostrils by way of expressing his sympathetic interest.

"Yes, Mr.—er—er——"

"Noblestone," Mr. Noblestone said.

"Noblestone—excuse me—in the restaurant business, if it ain't one thing it's another," Podolnik went on. "The cloak-and-suit business is a business for worries, and the clothing business ain't no business for a poor sleeper, neither; but of all the businesses for a feller to go crazy in the head in, y'understand, the restaurant business is already in a class by itself."

"The pickle business ain't no bed of roses, neither," Noblestone commented.

"Then you know that bloodsucker, Zadkin!" Podolnik exclaimed.

"Sure, I know him," Noblestone replied. "Only last night I read it in the *Evening News* where Dr. J. Slamberg, their Poor Food Expert, takes a can of Zadkin's Birdie Brand Crab-Apple Jelly and analyses it, y'understand. And what that feller didn't find in it except crab apples, Mr. Podolnik, you wouldn't believe it at all. And Zadkin's Pickles is the same way. You says to him a short time ago that he smells from vinegar. If he did he must of spilled some on

himself at home, because the *Evening News* Poor Food Expert says that, instead vinegar, he uses in his pickles an acid which the name alone would give you putnam poisoning."

"You would think he would be ashamed to call such *Machshovos* the Birdie Brand, after his daughter Birdie," Podolnik commented. "What is actresses for, anyway?"

"I give you right, Mr. Podolnik," Noblestone said; "but now he needn't got to be ashamed to call that jelly after his own mother, Mr. Podolnik, because, the way they have went after him under the United States Poor Food Laws, you could bet your life he wouldn't take no chances on making crab-apple jelly out of nothing farther away from crab apples as anyhow apple cores. He's a reformed feller, Mr. Podolnik, and his jams and jellies is costing him 50 per cent. more for material alone. So that's why he is jumping the rent on you."

"Well, what is it my fault if the United States Poor Food Law fellers get after him? I didn't snitch on him."

"Sure, I know. But it don't make no difference if a landlord gets soaked by a poker game, auction pinochle, Wall Street, or his wife's relations, Mr. Podolnik; he tries to pass on his losses to his tenants by jumping the rent on 'em, Mr.

Podolnik. In particular a restaurant *oder* a hotel, where the tenants has built up a big dropping-in-trade, y'understand, he is really at the mercy of the landlord if he wouldn't own his own building.

"It's an old saying and a true one, Mr.—er—er——"

"Noblestone."

"Excuse me—Noblestone—that a business man which is his own landlord has a sucker for a tenant."

"Might it is an old saying," Noblestone admitted, "but it ain't a true one; and if you couldn't remember my name, Mr. Podolnik, here's my card."

He handed to Podolnik a splendid lithographed imitation of the engraver's art, which in the limited space of a business card conveyed nearly as much information about Noblestone as the Congressional Directory does about a new member from the Middle West. From it Podolnik gathered that Noblestone's given name was Philip and that his activities as a broker embraced insurance in all its branches, real estate, money to loan on bond and mortgage, businesses of all kinds—and particularly hotel and restaurant businesses.

"Yes, Mr. Podolnik," Noblestone said, and

thereby interrupted the restaurant proprietor before he had time to inform himself of Noblestone's business address, residence, business telephone, residence telephone number, and that he took entire charge of properties, collected rents —appraisals a specialty—"Yes, Mr. Podolnik, it's a funny quincidence that I should be sitting here eating my lunch when you are getting this dirty deal from Zadkin. It's like you would—*Gott soll hüten*—got run over by a taxicab and the passenger is a doctor who makes a specialty of broken legs."

"How so?" Podolnik asked.

"Because I've got a dozen hotel and restaurant properties for you, which if you would accept any one of them, Mr. Podolnik, it would make your takings here look like a country lunch wagon. And if you would give me a few minutes at your house this evening I could prove it to you, too."

There was little about the personality of Miss Birdie Zadkin to suggest pickles, as there was much to remind one of jams. And B. Podolnik was not alone in condemning Morris Zadkin for using his daughter's name to advertise so dubious a product of the Birdie Brand of pickles and jams.

Louis Dworkin also felt that it was unduly flattering the Zadkin jam to call it after Birdie Zadkin, and would have felt so had it been made of pure fruit and syrup, without the addition of any preservatives; and while it cannot be said that Birdie reciprocated his feelings she was not entirely unconscious of Louis's fine dark eyes and glossy hair, brushed straight from the forehead.

Moreover, three years in a pickle factory had lent to Louis's figure the slimness of a professional dancer. Indeed, it was a slimness so pronounced as to have caused the average young man to think he was going to become a consumptive, and he would have taken cod-liver oil and slept in the open air.

Louis Dworkin's wasting figure, on the contrary, persuaded him that he was going to become a professional dancer, and he, therefore, took dancing lessons and rarely slept at all; so that soon he added to a dancer's emaciation a measure of a dancer's agility.

Only the day before Zadkin's visit to Podolnik's restaurant, Louis Dworkin had been complimented by Aristide, of Aristide & Wilkinson, professional dancers of the Jardin Mabille, corner of Broadway and a Subway station—that same Aristide who, according to one interviewer, had recently been saddened by the news that

his father's château near Bar-le-Duc had been destroyed by the Germans, and who, according to another, had been cheered by the news that his father's château near Isigny had been turned into a hospital for wounded aviators.

"Believe me, kid," said Aristide, the son of a two-château father, "a guy with your legs ain't got no call to be a bookkeeper in no pickle factory."

Hence, after Zadkin had left his place of business to interview Podolnik, Louis sat on his high stool, beating his wings against the bars of his pickle-factory cage, as he reflected on Aristide, who less than two short years before, his interviewers to the contrary notwithstanding, had been urging the customers of the Pedestrian $3.50 Shoe Corporation's Forty-second Street Store to try a pair of the company's five-dollar bench-made shoes, and not to forget to ask for Mr. Feingold when they came in again.

He, too, Louis reflected, might be a professional in the Jardin Mabille, or any other midnight restaurant, where the overhead on a club sandwich was figured out to be one dollar and twenty-five cents, if he only had the gumption to throw up his job in the pickle factory and take a chance, like Feingold had done! And he had not yet begun to enter in his ledger the

bills from the Phœnix Pharmaceutical Specialty Company and the Rhode Island Glucose Corporation, and the other purveyors to Zadkin's jam and pickle business, when the office door opened and his despair at once gave place to a more cheerful mood. "Good-morning, Mr. Dworkin," said the visitor. "Is popper in?"

Louis stepped down from his high stool and pushed it under the desk.

"He wouldn't be back till after lunch," he said, as he rolled the revolving chair from in front of his employer's desk and thrust it against the wall. Miss Zadkin shut the office door.

"You are sure he wouldn't be in before?" she said.

"Not a chance!" Louis replied, for he knew that every time Zadkin visited Podolnik's restaurant he remained to lunch out of compliment to his tenant—not that Zadkin was a stickler for etiquette in such matters, but Podolnik always refused to accept any money for the meal, preferring to take it out at home in conversations with Mrs. Podolnik and Louis Dworkin, wherein he discussed the relation of landlord and tenant with a freedom and emphasis that sometimes left him hoarse for the next twenty-four hours.

"He has gone down to see my uncle and he is sure to stay to lunch," Louis continued, taking

up the faded rug from the middle of the office floor and flinging it into a corner. Miss Zadkin turned the key in the office door.

"Now, listen, Mr. Dworkin," she said; "you told me last Tuesday, when popper was in Philadelphia, that in that new dip waltz it's three regular waltz steps and a dip."

"I said three hesitations and a dip," Louis said as his arm encircled her waist—"like this."

For ten minutes they hesitated and dipped in the space between the bookkeeper's desk and Zadkin's roll-top desk, until Miss Zadkin sank exhausted into the revolving chair.

"I guess you could keep that up for an hour," she said. "Don't you never get tired?"

"It's all a matter of practice," Louis replied, after the manner of Leschetizky addressing a promising pupil. "I seen Aristide and his partner working up a new step, and they done it for two hours, till they got it straight. It's the only way."

He used the spring or neap pronunciation of Aristide, but Miss Zadkin understood the allusion, nevertheless. She fanned herself with an insurance calendar she had plucked from the wall over her father's desk.

"To look at them two at the Jardin Mabille, you wouldn't think they had a trouble in the

world," she said; "and I guess they've got to work pretty hard sometimes, at that."

She called it Jar-din Ma-billy, but Louis recognized the name of the restaurant where Aristide & Wilkinson danced; in fact, he pronounced it that way himself.

"I should have Aristide's pipe!" he exclaimed.

"They say," Miss Zadkin said—"They say they are now married."

"Y'orter see the home they got on Long Island!" Louis declared. "Some people think professional dancers are loafers; but there's dancers and dancers, and if you get in right there's big money in the dancing game—for a married couple."

Miss Zadkin's rounded cheeks grew a shade pinker, and it is impossible to say into what tender channels the conversation might have strayed had it not been abruptly terminated by a tremendous banging at the office door.

The interruption caused Miss Zadkin to disappear by an exit marked Factory—No Admission! while Louis Dworkin restored the office to its normal appearance with the rapidity of an experienced stage crew making good the notice in the program: "There will be an intermission of twenty seconds between scenes one and two of

the last act." In fact, before twenty seconds had actually expired, Louis had unlocked the office door and admitted his employer.

"What the devil did you lock the door for?" Zadkin demanded.

"I was—now—eating my lunch," Louis explained.

"Eat your lunch in the factory!" Zadkin exclaimed.

And Louis made a most unfortunate rejoinder.

"You couldn't expect me to eat anything in the factory, Mr. Zadkin," he said—"the way it smells in there."

The effect of this utterly innocent protest was more than electrical—it was positively dynamic; and it touched off Zadkin, as though his initials were T.N.T. or perhaps T.R.

"*Sdètzo!*" he roared. "Well, if my business don't suit you, Dworkin, there's a lot of soap and perfumery businesses where you could loaf away your time."

"But, Mr. Zadkin——" Louis began.

"'S'nough!" Zadkin retorted. "The way you and your family are passing such insulting remarks to me, you would think that there was no smell to pickles till I invented it out of *Lahochlas*."

"But, Mr. Zadkin——" Louis began again.

"I am through with you, Dworkin," Zadkin said—"you and your whole family!"

"But wouldn't you listen to me, Mr. Zadkin?" Louis pleaded.

"*Koosh!*" Zadkin bellowed. "Here is your money up to Saturday night, *und fertig!* And let me tell you one thing—if ever you or your family come near this place again, Dworkin, you would find that things could happen to you in a pickle factory which would be a whole lot more *gefärhlich* as a smell!"

Thus, when Philip Noblestone arrived that evening at the Podolnik apartment on One Hundred and Seventeenth Street, a more diffident person would have hesitated to intrude upon so grief-stricken a household. In fact, as he followed Podolnik into the parlour, Mrs. Podolnik rocked to and fro on a couch in the corner and at intervals made noises that might have been either sobs or symptoms of an acute cold in the head. Beside her sat Louis Dworkin, and, far from seeming elated by his liberation from the bonds of double entry in the pickle factory, he presented an appearance of woe that was little short of despair.

"Mommer," Podolnik said, "this is Mr.

Noblestone, the feller I was talking to you about."

"Pleased 'ah to meet you," Noblestone murmured, and Mrs. Podolnik acknowledged the introduction by a triple-barrelled sob, ending with a loud sniff.

"Aw, get a bucket!" Louis exclaimed. "You ain't helping matters none that way, Aunt Fanny."

He produced a clean yellow-bordered handkerchief from his breast pocket and handed it to Mrs. Podolnik, who, at this fresh evidence of her nephew's affection, broke down utterly and wept anew.

"*Um Gotteswillen*, mommer, *lass mir im Ruh!*" Podolnik cried. "Supposing we do got to move, that ain't the end of the world, neither."

"Say!" Noblestone exclaimed; and by the utterance of this simple monosyllable, with an appropriate gesture, he managed to express his conviction that not only were there just as big fish in the sea, but that every cloud has a silver lining, and that sunshine follows rain.

"It ain't that, Mr. Noblestone," Mrs. Podolnik wailed; "for myself I don't give—excuse me —a damn, but why should he take it out on Louis? What did the boy done him, he should treat him that way? And I promised my sister

Miriam I would look out for him, and everything; and now what is it?"

"He could easy find another position," Noblestone said by way of consolation.

"He could find another position maybe," Podolnik said, glaring at his nephew by marriage; "*aber* not easy, Mr. Noblestone, because a young feller which ain't got a idee to improve himself but dancing, dancing, *und wiedermal* dancing, Mr. Noblestone—what for a future has he got?"

Louis stirred uneasily on the sofa, but remained discreetly silent.

"Do you begrudge the boy a little pleasure?" Mrs. Podolnik wailed.

"With him it ain't a pleasure; it's already pretty near a business."

"Well, there's worser businesses," Noblestone declared. "Many a professional dancer is making his hundred dollars a week, Mr. Podolnik. Yes, and many a feller is running a restaurant *mit* a cabarettal which, instead he is paying a professional dancer a hundred a week, y'understand, he would consider himself pretty lucky if he got such a professional dancer in his family."

"What did I told you, Podolnik?" Mrs. Podolnik said. "The boy could be a big assistance to you *mit* his dancing."

"Listen!" Podolnik said. "All my life I have been running restaurants, that people should eat in 'em. And I don't intend from my time of life to start in now and run a restaurant that people should make loafers of themselves dancing and carrying on, mommer."

"Dancing ain't carryin' on!" Mrs. Podolnik protested; "and it ain't making a loafer of yourself, neither."

"Let him rave, Aunt Fanny," Louis said, stroking her hand. "He don't know what he's talking about. At the Heatherstalk Inn, on the Pelham Parkway, every night they sell a couple hundred three-dollar Southern chicken dinners that's clean profit all over fifty-eight cents, Aunt Fanny. And they're strict there, like anything! One night last week a feller tried to pull off a new step there that Aristide & Wilkinson is doing every night at the Jardin Mabille, and two waiters grabbed a-hold of him, Aunt Fanny; and Curley Mike, the manager, says, 'If he does that again,' he says, 'push his face in!' he says. So you see, Aunt Fanny, a feller could take his own mother there and she wouldn't see nothing out of the way."

Philip Noblestone made another expressive gesture.

"Say!" he exclaimed; and this time the mono-

syllable implied "*Ça va sans dire!*" and settled once and for all in the mind of Mrs Podolnik that the relative respectability of a road house for automobiles and of a home for indigent clergymen was only a matter of degree.

"Now you take, for instance, a place like the Friar Tuck Inn," Noblestone said as he unfolded a list of hotels and restaurants for sale. "I presume you all heard of the Friar Tuck Hotel?"

"Jacob Fryer, of Fryer & Feinberg, in the pants business, I heard of," Podolnik said, "and Joseph Tuck, what used to was for years with Binder Bros., in the mattress business; but I never heard of no one by that name in the hotel business."

Mrs. Podolnik nodded.

"Joe Tuck was Binder's first wife's a nephew," she said. "The daughter, Lottie Tuck, married an actor; and after the divorce she went back home and kept house for Joe Tuck. He had a good job *mit* Binder Bros., because some people is willing to look after their wife's nephew, Podolnik. So long as Joe Tuck lived, they seen to it that he made a good living, Podolnik, because Sam Binder had that much respect for his wife that he couldn't see her nephew going to strangers for a job."

Here Mrs. Podolnik burst into tears.

"Say——! Look-a-here, mommer; give me a little peace and quiet, will you?" Podolnik cried. "I told you a hundred times Louis Dworkin could live with us till he finds another job. But what for a future is there for a young feller like him in the restaurant business?"

"In the restaurant business, I give you right," Mr. Noblestone said. "*Aber* in a road house, Mr. Podolnik—that is something else again. If you would know the number of fellers which from running a road house is now presidents of hotel corporations and directors of banks, y'understand, you wouldn't talk that way. Why, if my wife should got a nephew—supposing I was married, Mr. Podolnik—I couldn't wish for him a better future, even if he was my own son, than Louis Dworkin would got with you in this here Friar Tuck Inn."

He paused and fixed an earnest gaze upon Podolnik, as though defying him to doubt the statement he was about to make.

"Imagine, Mr. Podolnik," he said—"two thousand oitermobiles passes the Friar Tuck every hour on a fine Sunday!"

Mrs. Podolnik dried her streaming eyes.

"And supposing only one-half of one per cent. stop?" she said.

"You could reckon that many for tire troubles alone," Louis Dworkin assured her.

A pulse was beating in Podolnik's cheek and his lips moved as though in prayer, while he reckoned the cost of refrigerated chickens, frying size.

"Well, Mr. Podolnik," Noblestone argued, "what do you say?"

Podolnik shrugged his shoulders.

"*Nu*," he said, "where is the Friar Tuck Inn?"

One Sunday afternoon, six months later, Mr. and Mrs. Podolnik sat on a side veranda of the Friar Tuck Inn. A pulse beat in Mr. Podolnik's cheek, while at intervals, sobs convulsed Mrs. Podolnik's deeply upholstered frame. And, though no one is expected to believe that this pulse-beating and sobbing had persisted continuously ever since Noblestone had suggested the purchase of the hotel, it is, nevertheless, a fact that throughout that entire period both Mr. and Mrs. Podolnik had put in a pretty emotional time.

It is a trying experience to sit for six months on a road-house veranda and during every Sabbath hour watch two thousand automobiles pass by, each one bearing away its proportional share of the profit on a five-thousand-dollar invest-

ment; for Noblestone had not exaggerated the density of the traffic on the Boston Post Road in front of the Friar Tuck Inn.

However, Mrs. Podolnik's estimate that one-half of one per cent. of the vehicles would stop for refreshments and repairs had proved altogether too sanguine. The true ratio had been about .00001 to a thousand; and this ratio remained constant, despite the tacks that Louis Dworkin had sprinkled in the road and the hundreds of bottles he had broken. In fact, Louis was convinced that the only effective method of producing a sudden blow-out in front of the hotel, instead of a gradual deflation to take effect thirty miles up the road, would be to train and operate a machine gun at about the level of the average hub.

Podolnik rose from his seat and walked round to the front of the veranda, where for five minutes he surveyed the traffic-congested Sabbath calm of the Boston Post Road before returning to his chair beside Mrs. Podolnik.

"Nothing stops 'em!" he said. "The last banner I got fresh painted—*mit* 'Old-fashioned Chicken Dinner, Maryland Style, $2' on it—ain't got no more effect on them robbers as if it would be written altogether in *Loschen Hadodesch*."

Mrs. Podolnik sobbed hysterically; and in

the dining room, below, the coloured orchestra mocked at her sorrow with the splash of cymbals and shaking of cowbells.

"Tphoo-ee!" Podolnik exclaimed as an extra heavy thump of the bass drum caused Mrs. Podolnik to start in her chair. "*Gott sei dank*, we get rid of them *Schocherim* to-morrow!"

"*Aber* Louis says we should keep 'em for another week," Mrs. Podolnik pleaded.

"What do I care what Louis says?" Podolnik said as another explosive bang sounded through the veranda. "They'll have the house down round our shoulders."

Hardly had he finished speaking when there sounded a third and louder crash, accompanied by human shrieks.

"*Um Gotteswillen!* What is that *Schwartzer* up to?"

In the midst of a chorus of feminine shrieks and automobile horns Louis came on the run from the dining room.

"Come quick!" he cried. "A 1910 Twinplex just hit a 1913 Simpson-Detroit, and a 1915 James Knight piled right on top of 'em!"

"Oh, my gawd! Ain't it terrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Podolnik.

"What do you mean—terrible?" Mr. Podol-

nik retorted. "It's the first piece of luck we've had in six months! Louis, tell the chef to put over six chickens, stick ten quarts wine on the ice, and telephone for an amburlance."

He took the veranda steps three at a bound; but before he could reach the level of the Boston Post Road it was choked with automobiles from a point two miles east of New Rochelle to the Connecticut state line.

"Table for four? Yes, sir!" he shouted—to no one in particular—as he ran into the roadway.

And a man in a pongee duster turned to the other occupants of a motor car that, in its bedizened splendour, might have been marked Exhibit A and offered in evidence of its owner's profits in the sale of Munitions Stocks. What it actually represented, however, was the merger of the United Picture Film Company and the Picture Products Company, Limited, under the title of United Pictures, Limited. And it was William Brogdale, president. who wore the pongee duster.

"Let's go inside," he said. "This mess wouldn't be cleared up for an hour yet."

Podolnik led the way to a table near the dancing floor and handed a bill of fare to each of the party of four.

"You're lucky to get a table," he said. "The place was crowded, *aber* everybody rushed out to see the accident."

"Was they hurted much?" asked one of the young ladies of Mr. Brogdale's party.

The small delicate features of her oval face and her large melting eyes bore that inimitably wistful expression made familiar to the theatrical public through the close-up pictures of Juanita Le Grand, emotional star of United Pictures, Limited.

Without waiting for Podolnik to answer her, however, Miss Le Grand's close-up manner disappeared and her professionally mobile countenance registered exultation instead.

"Oh, goody!" she exclaimed. "They got fried chicken, Southern style!"

"Aristide can't eat it," the other lady said.

"Aw, cut it out!" Aristide retorted, for the remaining members of the *partie carrée* were no others than Aristide & Wilkinson, of the Jardin Mabille. "You treat me like I was a sick man!"

"All right," Wilkinson said; "but you know what happened to you last time when you danced on a spoiled stomach."

Aristide made a flapping gesture with his right hand, a survival of the days when, as Bennie Feingold and Sarah Winkelfeld, they trod to-

gether the boards of the Pedestrian $3.50 Shoe Store, on Forty-second Street.

"Never mind!" he retorted. "I said I'd take fried chicken. It ought to be good in a country place like this, Billy."

Billy Brogdale remained silent. His head was uplifted and he sniffed the air like a pointer in the vicinity of partridges.

"What's that you got on the fire?" he asked Podolnik.

"That?" Podolnik replied. "Oh, that! That's private. That's for the family."

"Well, don't make no stranger out of me," Brogdale said. "Consider me one of the family and give me a double portion of that."

"I couldn't do it," Podolnik said; "my wife would murder me. That's a couple ducks she got from a farmer yesterday; and she fixed it up special on account her nephew is very fond of it."

Brogdale thrust his hand into his trousers pocket and produced a roll of bills, which he manipulated beneath the tablecloth with marked unostentation. He handed Podolnik a twenty-dollar bill.

"Serve us the family dinner from soup to nuts," he said. "I'm through eating them excelsior fried chickens with hominy sauce, after a recipe of the Bill Posters' Union."

Podolnik swallowed convulsively in an effort to speak; for if there was anything that could make his mouth water more than Mrs. Podolnik's *gedämfte* duck, it was a twenty-dollar bill.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," he said: "I'll ask Mrs. Podolnik, and if she says it's all right, y'understand, I'm agreeable, too."

He rushed to the kitchen door, where, upon the rare occasion of serving a customer, Mrs. Podolnik usually acted as checker and cashier.

"Mommer!" he called; but Mrs. Podolnik's post was temporarily filled by the bartender. "Where is she?" he demanded.

"Upstairs in her room," the bartender said.

"And where is Louis?" Podolnik asked.

"Upstairs, with her," the bartender answered; but Podolnik hardly waited to hear his reply. He went up the back stairs three at a bound and burst into Mrs. Podolnik's darkened room.

"*Nu!*" he roared. "What is the meaning from this?"

Mrs. Podolnik and Louis Dworkin stood one on each side of the bed; and while Louis wielded a palm-leaf fan Mrs. Podolnik dabbed vinegar on the forehead of a young lady who lay unconscious on Mrs. Podolnik's best counterpane.

"*Stigun!*" Mrs. Podolnik said.

"What do you mean—*stigun!*" Podolnik cried.

"Ain't you got no heart?" Louis said, looking up from his fanning. "She was in the 1913 Simpson-Detroit."

For the employees of road houses are like that. No emotion can overrule their ruling passion. And if a road-house employee had witnessed Elijah's ascent to heaven in a chariot of fire he would have noticed the year and the make of the chariot first, and Elijah afterward.

"Out from here, Podolnik!" Mrs. Podolnik whispered. "I think I seen her eyes open."

Louis noticed them, too; and after her eyelids flickered, and at last opened, the young lady gazed full at Louis's face and smiled.

"Birdie!" Louis cried. "Miss Zadkin!"

"Miss Zadkin!" Podolnik repeated. "*Es fehlt nur noch!* For two years I paid good rent in his store on Prince Street, and he ain't satisfied that he raises me out of there; but the first good day I got in this rotten hole, mommer, his daughter comes here sick and upsets my entire place!"

"Out from here!" Mrs. Podolnik repeated. "Do you hear me?"

Louis Dworkin now held one of Miss Zadkin's unresisting hands; and she continued to smile weakly, but nevertheless happily.

"But, mommer," Podolnik almost whimpered, "them ducks is spoiling!"

"You can think of your stummick now!" Mrs. Podolnik exclaimed.

"Not my stummick," he protested; "I am going to give 'em to a customer in a pongee duster."

Mrs. Podolnik waved him away with a vinegar-soaked rag.

"For my part, he could be naked, even!" she said. "Go ahead and give 'em to him. And ring up Zadkin that his daughter is here and ain't hurted none."

After Podolnik had gone Miss Zadkin rapidly recovered from the shock of the collision, and in less than ten minutes Mrs. Podolnik followed her husband, while Miss Zadkin conversed with Louis Dworkin in quite her normal manner.

"*S'mehrjen*," she said, "I been passing this place every Sunday regular and I never knew you was here!"

"Did Mr. Zadkin buy a 1913 Simpson-Detroit?" Louis Dworkin asked.

"It ain't popper's car," Miss Zadkin replied; and her cheeks assumed their wonted pink and a little unwonted pink besides. "It belongs to a—now—friend of mine."

"A friend!" Louis exclaimed. "You ain't —now—engaged to him?"

The impertinence of this question did not occur to either Miss Zadkin or Louis, and she patted his hand reassuringly.

"Why do you ask?" she said.

"Because they took him in an amburlance to the Rye Hospital, with a broken leg," Louis said, and waited for the shriek that he dreaded would follow.

But Miss Zadkin, to his relief, was entirely unmoved. Evidently, then, he argued, they were not engaged.

"Tell me, Louis," she said, "do you grow your own vegetables and raise eggs and beans, and all them things, the way they do at the Heatherstalk Inn?"

"Say," Louis replied, "my uncle's been buying eggs from one concern for twenty years, and he says why should he switch now to hens? He's very old-fashioned in some ways."

"But home-grown vegetables sounds awful attractive," Birdie Zadkin went on. "Over at the Heatherstalk Inn they let you dig your own potatoes and pluck your own beans."

"Well, if they plucked their own potatoes at this place they'd have to pluck 'em out of a barrel," Louis said; "because if we was to raise vegetables here you know who'd do the heavy work, don't you?"

Birdie nodded and again patted his hand, this time sympathetically.

"At the same time, Louis," she said, "it wouldn't do you no harm. You ain't so thin like you used to be."

"Did you like me thin?" Louis asked.

And, with this tender prelude, is it any wonder that when, fifteen minutes later, Mrs. Podolnik opened the door she was obliged to close it again as quickly as she could, cough three times, and rattle the handle before venturing on a second entrance?

"Louis," she said, "your uncle is raising—excuse me—the devil, on account the place is filled *mit* customers, and you ain't there."

"I'm going right down," he said, "and I'll be back as soon as I can."

He hurried downstairs, and entered the dining room in time to take the order from an excited group who had been clamouring for attention for more than half an hour.

"And how would you like some new Bermuda potatoes, grown right here on the farm?" Louis added after he had dispatched a regular waiter for the first part of the order. "You got no idea of the difference in taste among potatoes dug out of the farm from the regular barrel potatoes."

"Two portions for the four of us," the host of

the party said; and the hat boy, who was hovering piratically over the adjoining table. winked at Louis.

"Where do you get this raised-on-the-farm stuff, Louis?" he inquired as Louis walked away; and the ex-pickle-factory bookkeeper drew him to one side.

"You know them yellow flowers in the back yard?" Louis said.

"They're called golden-glows, ain't they?" the check boy said.

"I should know what them flowers is called! Am I in the millinery business?" Louis demanded.

"Well, what about 'em?" the hat-check boy inquired.

"If anybody wants to dig their own potatoes," Louis said, "take 'em over there."

"But how can they dig potatoes over there?" the hat-check boy asked.

"Because that's where I am going to bury a couple dozen soon as I get through with this order," Louis said.

During the next ten minutes he suggested to the hungry patrons, with unvarying success, "string beans just plucked from the garden; eggs laid within the hour; corn freshly gathered from the stalk"; and in no case were the diners dis-

satisfied. Nor could they have been; for, as a matter of fact, after two hours of capacity business, the vegetable supply of the Friar Tuck Inn was so nearly exhausted that the pantryman and the hat-check boy were scouring the neighbourhood for sweet corn, beans, and peas.

And as the afternoon wore on every truck farmer in the vicinity was breaking the Sabbath and easing his conscience by charging Podolnik three times the week-day prices of Washington Market.

Until almost midnight, fresh guests continued to arrive, for, though all traces of the accident had long since disappeared from in front of the Friar Tuck Inn, its sheds overflowed with automobiles, and a queue of waiting cars stretched up and down the Boston Post Road as a pulling advertisement of the entertainment to be had within.

Thus, at half-past twelve the dining room of the Friar Tuck Inn continued to blaze with the light and heat engendered by several dozen electric lights, a couple of hundred guests, and more particularly six African musicians, who were working themselves into a condition of frenzy over the latest one-step.

Such, however, is the timbre of the human voice that it will rise above the most compli-

cated score; and when Morris Zadkin, closely followed by Mrs. Zadkin, entered the dining room of the Friar Tuck Inn and demanded of the head waiter, "Moiderer! What did you done with my daughter?" Podolnik heard it in the pantry.

In his haste to reach the dining room he upset the tray of Maryland fried chickens, which he was checking, so that it was necessary to return them to the kitchen and replate them with a new coat of waterproof cracker dust before they were again fit to be served.

"*Bist du verückt?*" he cried, as he grabbed Zadkin by the arm and piloted him toward the bar, into which Max, the head waiter, had already thrust Mrs. Zadkin. "Your daughter is all right. I was going to telephone you when I got the time."

"When you got the time!" Zadkin exclaimed. "*Mein* poor wife is pretty near dead from anxiety. We rang up every hospital from the Bronx to Bridgeport—and he 'was going to telephone us when he got the time'—*sagt er!*"

"Where is she?" Mrs. Zadkin wailed.

"Where should she be?" Podolnik replied. "She is upstairs, if you want to see her."

He led the way to Mrs. Podolnik's parlour and, without knocking, flung open the door.

"Miss Zadkin," he said. "your mommer is here."

The warning came too late, however, for Mr. and Mrs. Zadkin had already entered the room, approximately a tenth of a second before Birdie could rise from Louis Dworkin's lap.

"Oo-ee!" Mrs. Zadkin cried, and sank heavily into the nearest chair; while Zadkin remained in the doorway, clasping and unclasping his hands, until his finger-nails, had he not been addicted to biting them, would have dug into the palms of his hands; for in his imagination each of his hands clasped a human neck, and the neck in both cases was the same—viz., Louis Dworkin's neck.

B. Podolnik alone retained his presence of mind.

"Ain't you ashamed to act that way, Louis?" he said bitterly. "With the whole place full of customers! What do I pay you for, anyway?"

In justice to both Louis and herself, Birdie concluded that she ought to offer a reasonable explanation.

"He—now—had something in his eye," she said, "and I was trying to get it out for him."

"He had something in his eye—and her not five days engaged to be married yet!" Mrs. Zadkin said as she rocked to and fro in her grief.

"Engaged!" Louis cried, and his face grew as pale as it used to be before he left the pickle factory. "Is that right, Birdie?" he demanded; and Birdie coloured guiltily. She laid her hand on his coat sleeve; but he shook it off. "Here," he said. "Let me out of this!"

"Listen, Louis!" Birdie pleaded. "Don't be so quick in jumping conclusions. It was him that was driving the car, Louis. Maybe he was killed, or something."

"Killed!" Mrs. Zadkin shrieked, and straightway became so hysterical that in the excitement Louis was forgotten; and when Mrs. Zadkin had become sufficiently calm for Zadkin to remember his murderous intentions the proposed victim had escaped to the lower floor.

"Now you see what your nephew done it!" Zadkin said.

"Well, how could I help it?" Podolnik asked.

"It ain't enough that you leave me *mit* a store vacant on my hands for six months," Zadkin continued, "but your nephew must got to try to bust up my daughter's engagement yet!"

"He didn't do no such thing!" Birdie interrupted. "I didn't tell him I was engaged; and, anyhow, if you want to make up a punk line of pickles and jams why should I be the goat?"

"Shut up your mouth!" Zadkin said. "Who am I doing this for if it ain't for you and your mommer?"

"Excuse me," Podolnik said. "Please do your family washing private, Zadkin. If Mrs. Zadkin would like something, a little *schnapps oder* cream dee mint, I will wake up Mrs. Podolnik; though I don't want to do it. Otherwise, if it is all the same for you, and you've got a taxi outside, Zadkin, it's already pretty near one o'clock, and the roads ain't none too good between here and New York, neither."

Meantime, Louis had descended to the lower floor and sought to hide his agitation in the gloomy interior of the storeroom. But even there he found no relief, for on the shelf opposite the doorway stood six jars of Birdie Brand Crab-Apple Jelly, and from out the middle of each label stared the features of Miss Birdie Zadkin, which were contained in an oval-shaped ribbon bearing the inscription: Trade-Mark Registered.

With welling eyes, he seized one of the jars in both hands; and he was pressing his lips to the half-tone reproduction of Birdie's face when Max Neumann, the head waiter, entered.

"I want to ask you something, Louis," said Max, whose address when off duty was the sidewalk in front of the *Staats Zeitung* bulletin board.

"Is it so that them two professional dancers, which has been here ever since the accident, is Frenchers?"

From the doorway he nodded in the direction of Aristide & Wilkinson; and there was something about the gesture and the manner in which he gutturalized the word "Frenchers" which seemed to imply that if a plate of hot soup down Aristide's neck would hasten the surrender of Verdun Max was not the man to hesitate at it.

"Who told you that?" Louis asked him.

"Well, we got an extra here from the joint where them two dancers work," Max continued, "and he said that he seen it in the paper where the feller's father is Ritter von Bar-le-Duc, or some such town, in France."

"What are you talking nonsense?" Louis said. "Bar-le-Duc ain't a town; it's a jelly that comes in glasses about a quarter the size of this."

And then there occurred one of those typical manifestations of genius reacting from a disappointment in love; and Louis snapped the thumb and finger of his right hand in the access of a sudden idea.

"Tell me, Max," Louis said, "do we got any cream cheese in the house?"

"There's two cakes in the icebox since last

Sunday already," Max said, "if they ain't got green plush on 'em by now."

"Scrape 'em good," Louis said, "and cut 'em in half. I am going to work 'em off."

He pried the patent top from a jar of Zadkin's jelly and emptied its contents into four mineral-water glasses, which he carried on a tray to the little office behind the stairs. When he brought them back, ready to be served with the cream cheese, each glass bore a label on which was inscribed in the clerkly hand of an ex-bookkeeper in a pickle factory:

MRS. FANNY PODOLNIK'S
HOMEMADE FRUIT JELLIES
CRAB APPLE

"But, mommer," Podolnik pleaded one Saturday morning, six weeks later, "if you could do it *mit* three ducks, why not *mit* thirty? All you use is ten times so much duck, ten times so much *Knoblauch*, and so on. Always ten times so much—ain't that right?"

Evidently it was not right.

"You are crazy in the head," Mrs. Podolnik said. "That duck is an invention of my poor mother—*olav hasholom!*—which she got it from a family by the name Bernard, which used to live on——

"What's the difference where they lived?" Podolnik broke in. "This here Brogdale telephoned he would be up to-morrow *mit* fifty members of the Motion-Picture Fellers of America, or something; and he wants me I should give 'em the same duck they had when they was here that Sunday. So what could I do, mommer?"

"—which they used to live on Eighty-ninth Street and I forgot the avenue," Mrs. Podolnik continued severely. "And if you wouldn't taste the duck every three minutes for the first half hour, y'understand, it gets away from you."

"Well, what of it?" Podolnik asked.

"What of it!" Mrs. Podolnik cried. "Do you think I am going to taste thirty ducks every three minutes for a half an hour?"

"Let the pantryman taste 'em," Podolnik said. "I don't care who tastes 'em, so long as you cook 'em."

"What do you think I am going to make myself sick cooking ducks for them loafers?" Mrs. Podolnik asked.

"They ain't loafers; they're customers," Podolnik said.

"Let 'em eat Maryland chickens and all that *Machshovas*," Mrs. Podolnik retorted. "Come and stay here till all hours of the night, and I

should *dämpf* for such *sh'gotzim* duck, like my poor mother—*olav hasholom!*—used to make!"

"Well, do it for Louis's sake," Podolnik pleaded. "The boy works awful hard here the last six weeks. Yesterday he gets up before half-past eight and buries in the garden pretty near a barrel potatoes."

"He is a good boy," Mrs. Podolnik said.

"Then you would cook the duck?" Polodnik asked.

"But I wouldn't make no habit of it," Mrs. Podolnik said.

"You don't have to," Podolnik assured her. "The chef will watch you. He is a quick learner, mommer. He told me he was only shown once how to fix Chicken *à la* Maryland, and he done it right away."

"From how that stuff tastes," Mrs. Podolnik said, "it wouldn't do him no harm to be shown again."

Thus was Duck *à la* Podolnik firmly established on the bill of fare of the Friar Tuck Inn, and inscribed on the various banners hanging in the doors and on the trees adjacent to the inn, by which more and more automobile tourists were lured from the bumpy asphalt of the Boston Post Road. Moreover, along this same road, for a distance of many miles in each direction,

every patch of growing vegetables bore a painted sign:

FROM THE FARM TO THE TABLE!
THESE VEGETABLES GROWN
FOR
THE FRIAR TUCK INN
5 MILES

Hence, though Podolnik continued to buy his supplies from the New York market, the patrons seemed to detect a certain freshness in the quality of the vegetables. Such is the power of suggestion over the average human mind—and Louis Dworkin argued that if the mind of a suburban road-house guest is not average, what is?

He paid two dollars for painting the signs and one dollar for permission to maintain them in the vegetable patches; and between this enterprise and the sale of Mrs. Fanny Podolnik's Homemade Fruit Jellies to the summer residents of the Sound shore he sought to banish from his memory the duplicity of Birdie Zadkin. He found it a difficult task, however, since every time he converted one jar of Birdie Brand Jelly into four jars of the homemade product its registered trade-mark revived the old heartache.

"The boy grows thinner every day," Mrs. Podolnik commented to her husband as they sat

in their private parlour on the Sunday of President William Brogdale's duck luncheon. "He works too hard *mit* his jelly business."

"Say," Podolnik protested, "the most he could got from being too busy with his jellies is writer's cramp! The trouble *mit* that boy is, he's in love."

"In love!" Mrs. Podolnik cried. "Ain't that terrible! I told you you should hire a professional dancer and not let that boy carry on *mit* customers."

"This ain't anyone he dances with," Podolnik answered; "it's Birdie Zadkin."

"But Birdie Zadkin is already engaged. That's why Zadkin raised the devil here that night they called here—so you told me."

"They didn't raise the devil because she was engaged," Podolnik corrected, "but because she was engaged and at the same time she was sitting on Louis's knee."

"For why you never said nothing about this to me before?" Mrs. Podolnik asked.

"Well, you was in bed and asleep at the time," Podolnik explained; "and, besides, why should I told you if your nephew was acting like a loafer?"

"What do you mean—acting like a loafer?" Mrs. Podolnik retorted. "If he loves the girl why shouldn't she sit on his knee?"

Podolnik flapped his right hand in the air.

"I wouldn't argue it *mit* you," he said, "because, while I am running a respectable road house I couldn't take it too particular, neither; but, at the same time, mommer, we ought to draw the line somewheres, and if Birdie Zadkin is going to have any more oitermobile accidents round here, you should please sit up with her until the family arrives."

He strolled into the dining room of the inn, where William Brogdale's duck luncheon was in noisy progress.

"Hello, Podolnik!" Brogdale called to him.

"Is everything satisfactory?" Podolnik asked.

"Fine!" Brogdale said. "Let me introduce you to the greatest moving-picture performer in America—Miss Juanita Le Grand!"

"Pleased 'a meet you!" Podolnik said.

"She wants to ask you something," Brogdale said; and Miss Le Grand's mobile features registered the beseeching of a favour, assuming an expression she had used only the day before in a film entitled "The Guilty Dollar," wherein, as the ranchowner's daughter, she had pleaded for her father's life with Roderiguo, the leader of the Mexican bandits.

"Listen, Mr. Podolnik," she said, "would you now tell me the recipe for this here duck stew?"

Podolnik shrugged his shoulders.

"The only thing I am sure about is that it's got duck into it," Podolnik said. "It's an idee from my wife, lady. I'll go fetch her."

After he had gone Miss Le Grand turned to the gentleman on her right.

"Why so dumb, Joe?" she said. "You ain't peeved about anything, are you?"

The gentleman addressed as Joe smiled with an effort.

"Not a thing in the world!" he said.

"You ain't said a word since you began eating that cream cheese and crab-apple jelly," Miss Le Grand said.

The dish in question was played up on the bill of fare as: Special! Heart of Cream Cheese, with Mrs. Fanny Podolnik's Homemade Crab-Apple Jelly. Eighty-five Cents. And, since fresh peach ice cream was only sixty cents, Brogdale naturally ordered the more expensive dessert for his guests. Most of them found it delicious; but the gentleman addressed as Joe tasted and retasted the crab-apple jelly, and his manner became so distrait that it almost appeared as though the flavour of crab-apple jelly revived for him some hidden sorrow. He might have been a character of De Maupassant's, who gets a whiff of Quintessence Bouton-d'Or from the

handkerchief up the sleeve of his friend, the celebrated African explorer, and who is immediately reminded of an incident at Bormes les Mimosas to the extent of about three thousand words, of which two thousand have to be omitted in the English translation.

Joe had sunk once more into a reverie over his crab-apple jelly when Mrs. Podolnik came from the parlour and approached Miss Le Grand.

At one glance she took in the emotional actress's fluffy bleached hair and heavily blacked eyelashes, and her temperature became subnormal with conscious respectability.

"*Nu!*" she said. "What do you want from me?"

Miss Le Grand apprehended this brusqueness to be a symptom of the embarrassment a person of Mrs. Podolnik's social limitations might feel upon meeting for the first time a famous motion-picture actress, and she decided to put Mrs. Podolnik quite at her ease.

"Take a seat, Mrs. Podolnik," she said, "and meet my friend, Doctor Slamberg."

Mrs. Podolnik sat on the edge of a chair and folded her hands beneath what had once been her waist. She acknowledged the introduction by drawing down the corners of her mouth till they joined the crease under her chin, and Miss

Le Grand concluded that she ought to make further efforts toward dispelling her visitor's bashfulness.

"It's funny—the way Doctor Slamberg met me," she went on. "If you will remember, Mrs. Podolnik, how six weeks ago a gentleman and lady had a—now—automobile accident in front of your place——"

Mrs. Podolnik nodded.

"And one of them Larchmont cops says: 'Who seen the accident?' And somebody says they seen Miss J. Le Grand, the U. P. L. star, in an automobile—ain't that so, Billy?"

She appealed to Brogdale, to whom Mrs. Podolnik's crab-apple jelly seemed to suggest nothing but more crab-apple jelly; in fact, his mouth was so full of the jelly and cheese that he could only nod his affirmation of Miss Le Grand's story.

"So the next day," she continued, "a lawyer comes up to my apartment and says: 'Is this Miss Le Grand?' And certainly I says 'Yes,' because lawyers has got nothing on me. I always lived up to every one of my contracts, and——"

"What's that got to do with it?" Brogdale inquired hoarsely, if not menacingly, through a disappearing mouthful of jelly and cheese.

It was not the host but the moving-picture president who spoke now.

"Nothing," Miss Le Grand replied; "but all I can say is——"

"Stick to your story," Brogdale interrupted again. "You was saying a lawyer comes up to your flat and says did you see an accident where Doctor Slamberg was taken to the Van Scoy Memorial Hospital, at Rye, and the kid didn't wait to hear no more, Mrs. Podolnik; but she goes right up to the hospital with flowers, because she's got a big heart, even if she is small over a salary clause in a contract."

Miss Le Grand's mobile features involuntarily registered some foiled vampire stuff in the direction of Brogdale; but a moment later, when she turned toward Doctor Slamberg, it might have been a close-up of the Ranchowner's Daughter and Waco Jim, the foreman, following the subtitle: "I'm only your father's foreman, Margaret——"

"And ever since then, Doctor Slamberg and me is good friends—ain't we, Joe?" she said; and to prove it, she patted Doctor Slamberg's hand and rested her head on his shoulder. She also closed her eyes contentedly for half a minute. And when she opened them again Mrs. Podolnik had disappeared, with her recipe for stewed duck locked in her bosom.

She went at once to the telephone switchboard and directed the hat-check boy to call up a New York City number for her. And as she closed the door of the booth he heard her utter in excited tones the first words of a twenty-minute conversation.

"Listen, Mr. Zadkin," she said: "Is your daughter's intended's name called Dr. Joe Slamberg?"

Two hours later a taxi arrived at the Friar Tuck Inn from Rye Station, and three passengers alighted from it.

They were greeted by Mrs. Podolnik, who, in her efforts to seem absolutely impartial—acting merely out of a sense of justice and decidedly not in the interest of her nephew—wore so gloomy an air that, at the sight of her, Mrs. Zadkin burst into tears.

"Listen, mommer! Look at me!" Birdie said. "Am I upset? Don't distress yourself over a feller like him. He ain't worth it."

Mrs. Podolnik led the two women to the office, where they were shortly joined by Zadkin, who, so to speak, had been enjoying an hors d'œuvre of the big row that awaited him by trying to make the taxicab driver take fifty cents less than the legal fare.

"Now where is he?" he said.

"First, I'll show them to you," Mrs. Podolnik replied; "*aber* don't start nothing in there, because my husband would give me—excuse me—hell if he found out I brought you up here."

"Popper wouldn't say nothing," Birdie assured her.

"On my word and honour as a gentleman," Zadkin said; and Mrs. Podolnik led them into the dining room and seated them at a table where an unobstructed view of the luncheon party could be obtained.

As a party, it had unquestionably passed its crest. Indeed, for the management, its profitable stage had come and gone, and sparkling mineral water in some cases, with the addition of sod. bicarb., was being served to the survivors.

As for the mobile features of Miss Juanita Le Grand, they reposed on Dr. Joseph Slamberg's left shoulder and registered slumber in a closeup —so close that Doctor Slamberg's left arm easily encircled her waist.

For more than a minute Zadkin gazed on this shocking spectacle until Doctor Slamberg's Vandyke beard swept the alabaster surface of Miss Le Grand's cheek; and the pickle manufacturer could stand it no longer. He surrendered his word of honour as a gentleman and made a noise

like a coon dog at the foot of an inhabited hollow tree.

"Oo—oo—ee!" he exclaimed, and made a leap for the duck-lunch table; but Max Neumann, the head waiter, with the assistance of the hat-check boy, restrained him.

Doctor Slamberg rose from his seat and smiled amiably. He was under the hazy impression that he was exhibiting great presence of mind.

"Mr. Zadkin," he said, "let me introduce you to an old friend of mine—Miss Juanita Le Grand."

Even then, had Miss Le Grand backed him up, all might have been well; but, instead, she woke with a jerk and started in to register affection—and not Platonic affection, either.

"Oh, Joe darling," she said, "I was dreaming of you and me in a cottage near U. P. L. City, California—just you and me, Joe darling—together. Ain't that right?"

She pulled him down by his coat tails and immediately resettled her head on his shoulder, while Zadkin turned to Max Neumann.

"Lemme go!" he said. "I never want to see him again!"

Max and the hat-check boy released his arms and he returned to his seat.

"Come, mommer! Come, Birdie!" he said.

"Let's go home. And I don't give a nickel if that fellow says he found it strychnine and arsenic in my pickles, I wouldn't let *mein Tochter* got nothing more to do with such a loafer."

"Wait a minute!" Mrs. Podolnik said. "You are going to stay for supper—sure, you are! Podolnik and Louis will be through in a minute, and I have the table all laid in the parlour."

Zadkin looked at his wife and daughter, and then shrugged his shoulders by way of surrender.

"How is Louis?" he said.

Some six weeks afterward a letter arrived at the Friar Tuck Inn, as follows:

THE EVENING NEWS PURE FOOD BUREAU.
Dr. J. Slamberg, Director.

GENTLEMEN: The attention of this bureau has been called to Mrs. Fanny Podolnik's Homemade Crab-Apple Jelly by a patron of your restaurant, and we should be glad to have a sample can, taken from stock, for examination and analysis.

No honest manufacturer has reason to fear the activities of this bureau, and if your product is found to be pure we shall be only too happy to indorse it in our columns.

Yours truly,
THE EVENING NEWS PURE FOOD BUREAU.
Dr. J. Slamberg, Director.

A prompt reply was sent in the following words:

EVENING NEWS.

DEAR GENTS: We are now the manufacturers of Mrs. Fanny Podolnik's Homemade Pure Fruit Jellies, and communications with respect to same should ought to be made to us. Yours truly,

THE M. ZADKIN CO.
By Louis Dworkin, Vice President

And—he ought to have added—son-in-law.

THE END

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